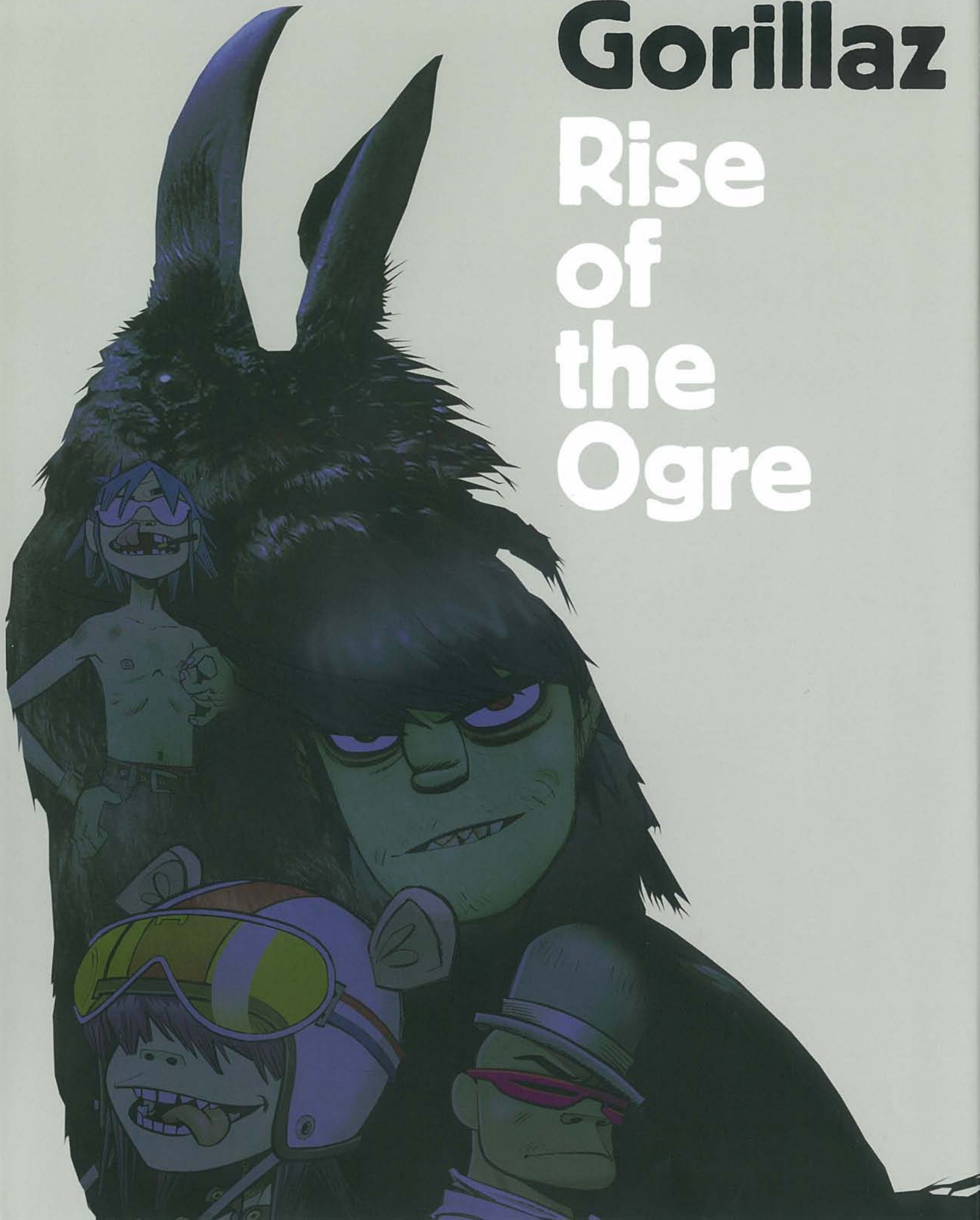
Gorillaz

Rise of the Ogre



Rise of the Ogre

Gorillaz

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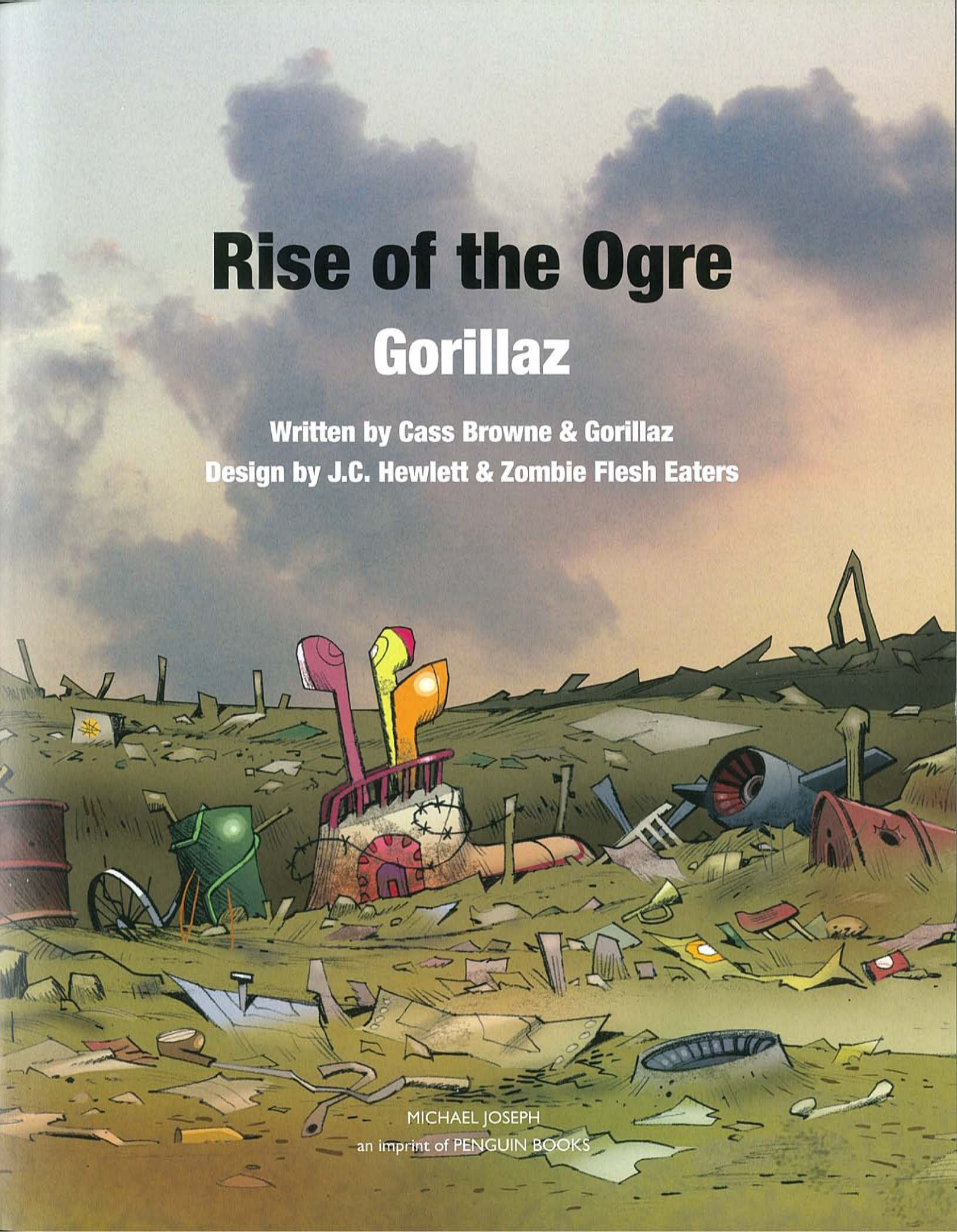

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Prelude

Murdoc Alphonce Niccals stood shaking at the side of the stage. As the line before him grew ever shorter, he knew that the inevitable moment of reckoning was rapidly approaching. He would've done anything to escape this humiliation. However, the only thing he feared more was the wrath of his sadistic father, stood yards behind him ensuring that the child completed the agreed performance.

Money had changed hands, and the deal had to be honoured ...

'Ladies and Gentlemen, please give a warm-hearted welcome to little Murdoc Niccals as the small wooden boy Pinocchio, singing ... "I've Got No Strings"!'

A muted round of applause rippled around the pub ...

There was a moment's silence. Murdoc stood rooted to the spot, resplendent in lederhosen, strap-on nose and feathered Alpine hat; his knees knocking together like a couple of castanets. As the delay continued the audience started shifting in their seats.

A booming voice from the back of the hall broke out:

'C'mon! ... Get on with it. My beer's getting cold.'

His father's thick leathery boot connected hard with Murdoc's backside, hurtling the young child onto the stage. *'Start singing, you little sod, or I'll smash your teeth in.'*

The bright, blinding lights shone straight into his eyes, as the smell of warm beer, stale cigarettes and cheap aftershave wafted across the pub. The music started up and as Murdoc looked to the side his eyes implored to be spared this dignity-stripping ritual. His father growled his decision nice and clearly.

The local 'Are-You-A-Star?' talent contest was the bane of Murdoc's life. Each month the local pub would hold this type of demeaning event. Talentless clods would enter, impersonating the big names of the day, gurning their way through soul-sapping performance after mindless performance. The prize? £2.50 and the chance to humiliate yourself further in the bi-annual county finals. If you were really good you could then go on to make a cock of yourself on national TV.

Murdoc's dad had often threatened to enter his son into this cattle show, purely as another vague opportunity to make some fast dough, and had this month backed his claim.

Murdoc: Everything about this made me sick. How these stinky old giffers were sitting in a knackered-out pub, accepting this crap as entertainment. Watching talentless people pointlessly impersonating other talentless celebrity stars ... Watching my bullying bastard father trying to work this game for cash. None of it worked. If you don't watch it, that's your future right there.

Murdoc swore from this moment on never again would he take to the stage under someone else's direction. He would wreak his revenge on this world of buffoons.

Murdoc: Yeah. You could say that was the day that Gorillaz were really born ... from that seed of rejection. A rejection of all of that kind of rubbish.

Murdoc pauses for a moment reflecting on the long-forgotten memory. He then looks up.

'Actually, I'm gobsmacked you've chosen to open your stupid book with this story ...'

Chapter 1
Nature Adores a Vacuum

'Hello?
Is anyone there?
Hello!?

M I A I
Thousand miles an hour
Gorillaz got the bass drum
Gorillaz say I want some, some'

'The best thing about being a celebrity is that you can bore the crap out of people and they think it's their fault. Sometimes I can sit there without a single thought in my head, and people find the silence so awkward they'll prattle on into the ether about any old rubbish. My silence feels like some kind of judgement to them. Before Gorillaz took off I couldn't get anyone to talk to me. Now I can't get them to shut up.' MURDOC NICCALS, BASS PLAYER OF GORILLAZ

The Gorillaz Story is now something of a legend. The tale of a world-storming band born out of the sick mind of foul-smelling bass-player and ego-driven mastermind Murdoc Niccals. Undeniably, the four Gorillaz – Murdoc, singer 2D, drummer Russel Hobbs and the diminutive Japanese guitarist Noodle – have changed the face of music and beyond, forever. An incredibly creative blend of music, animation, technology, wit and humour, the Gorillaz re-invented the possibilities of entertainment with every release.

This approach has made Gorillaz a global phenomenon, having sold in excess of 15 million records worldwide to date. They've won awards from Grammys to Webbys to MTV awards and more, for practically every aspect of their operation.

Murdoc Niccals: Keep going.

The Gorillaz website alone has won numerous accolades, an online headquarters that stretches the boundaries of imagination and sometimes taste, and whose creation gave birth to a vast community of fans that spans the world. Kong Studios gave access to an unprecedented amount of interactivity, throwing its doors wide open to a tidal wave of eager fanatics.

By rattling the cages of the music industry so fiercely, the fearless nature of the Gorillaz' experiments illuminated the way forward for all, pioneering techniques and redefining the cultural landscape along the way.

Murdoc: Yes, mate! Go on, more!! You're getting *me* going now.

In 2001 Gorillaz burst out of every TV and radio with their seminal hit 'Clint Eastwood' and then unleashed a fantastic collision of dub, reggae, hip hop, punk and Cuban music, in the form of their debut album. They thrilled us and wowed us

with their jaw-dropping visuals and wicked sense of adventure. They brought a fresh, original and vital voice, breathing new life into tired formats, and left a rich, colourful legacy in their wake to inspire a whole new generation of artists to come.

The accomplishments since their inception have been breathtaking.

More recently with Demon Days, their second album, the fantastic foursome again blazed across our consciousness with a magnificent piece of work that somehow managed to surpass even the outstanding achievements made by their first record. Both musically and visually the Gorillaz had reached further and deeper. The all-embracing attitude of Gorillaz provided a limitless canvas for a whole cast of talents, old and new, allowing each of them to express themselves in a unique, exciting and vibrant way.

In doing so, Gorillaz and their collaborators were articulating the fresh spirit of the age in a most joyful way. No other band has explored or encapsulated the potential and capabilities of the digital era more so than Gorillaz. Moreover, they have managed to do this whilst still remaining soulful and sensitive to the talents of the past.

By truly uniting an astounding array of influences under one roof, they've displayed exactly what can be achieved when intelligence, understanding and creativity come together for the greater good.

Murdoc: *Oh yeeaaahhh!!* You're pressing all the right buttons! Faster!

Along with the album, another landslide of breathtaking videos, and some magical, moving live performances, Gorillaz gave the world something that had never been seen before. They provided us with an enchanting and invigorating sense that the impossible is perfectly achievable.

By uniting their own irrefutable talents with a dynamic set of contributors and an unfaltering attention to detail that passes over all facets of their output, the quality of the Gorillaz' work has been impeccable.

Murdoc: Mmmmm . . .

Now, for the first time, the four members of Gorillaz have agreed to talk us through this incredible journey, giving first-hand insights into their backgrounds, their formation, the highs, the lows, their middle names and more . . . We see the intricacies, the love, the life and the labour of what goes in to making a world-class band such as this.

This is the story of Russel, Murdoc, Noodle & 2D.

This is the story of Gorillaz.

The story of The World's Greatest Band . . .

Murdoc: Almost there!

This is 'The Rise of The Ogre'.

Murdoc: Ohhhh . . . I'm done.

(Ahem.) That'll be £20 please . . .

Chapter 2
Unto the World a Band is Born

'Murdoc is god
Murdoc is god
Murdoc is god
Johnny is dead

Murdoc is king
Murdoc is dead
Murdoc is god
Johnny is dead'

Murdoc Niccals – 'Spawn of Stoke'

Murdoc Niccals was born in the stinking borough of Stoke-on-Trent on June 6th 1966. The exact whereabouts have never been verified, but it was rumoured that Murdoc's mother gave birth to him whilst still in residence at the Belphagor Sanatorium, a halfway house for 'the sick, the needy and the incredibly bored'. Whatever the truth behind this is, the infant Murdoc was found abandoned upon the doorstep of his nefarious father's house.

Murdoc recalls: Oddly, everyone knew who my father was, but no one quite knew who my mother was . . . although there were a lot of quite vivid suggestions. I was just found as a baby on Sebastian Niccals' doorway one night, when he came home from one of his sessions in the pub.

His father, Sebastian Jacob Niccals (or Jacob Sebastian Niccals, depending on who's asking), was a notorious booze-hound, a gambler, womaniser and ne'er-do-well; a man whose collection of dubious vices would put Bill Sykes to shame. He was thought to have squired a number of children in the area, and had spent most of his ragged life avoiding any form of work, one way or another.

Auspiciously, upon his return from the pub that fateful night, a filthy black raven stood perched upon Murdoc's swaddling, which should have given Sebastian at least some clue as to the alignment of the contents held within. Sebastian shooed away the oily, coughing creature and took this mop-topped bundle inside. One can only imagine the disappointment on his sozzled face when he unwrapped the surprise package.

'That's me aged ten. Even then my dark, smouldering good looks stood out'
MURDOC NICCALS

Murdoc: I think if eBay had been invented at the time, he would have sold me online there and then. As it was I had to endure years of his booze-sodden venomous behaviour before he shipped me off to school. Which I loathed just as equally. I'm often asked why my behaviour is so crooked now, but it's a lot clearer when you see what manky loins I sprung from. '*Man hands on misery to man*', y'know. Actually, 'This Be The Verse' would have been a killer song. Unfortunately Philip Larkin never managed to write 'This Be The Chorus', which is essential for chart success. And it needs to come in within the first 45 seconds or Radio 1 won't play it.

From the age of seven, Murdoc attended Sodsworth Comprehensive School, although from the first day he could frequently be found in the corridors during lessons. His form teacher, Mr Gravadlax, remembers Murdoc with a great deal of warmth, as a scruffy loveable attendee of The Sodsworth School.

Mr Gravadlax: Murdoc Niccals? Oh no, not him . . . I hated him. He was an appalling student, whose time was better spent propping up walls outside of the classroom, rather than inside distracting the other pupils with his endless quacking noises and pointless malicious humour. Although I must admit even then he had charisma and a great knack of getting his acquaintances to see things, er . . . 'The Murdoc Niccals Way'. He certainly stood out, but ultimately he was a stupid imbecile who often turned up smelling of whisky.

Murdoc: Better than turning up stinking of poppers.

Tony Chopper: Yeah, I remember Murdoc. A creepy little runt. Always stank like an unwashed gym kit; ball sweat. I took a lot of pleasure in making his life a misery. Having said that, if I'd known what he was going to become I probably would have acted, well . . . a bit different. See, I'm 42 years old now and I spent all last night stacking shelves in a Happy Shopper, so what does that make me?

Murdoc acquired quite a few nicknames from Chopper: 'Nerdoc', 'Runt', 'Reject', 'Faceache', 'Oddsock', 'Wallybollocks', 'Trenchfoot', 'Gaylord', 'Great Stinking Pile of Horsedung' . . . The list went on, with new ones added daily.

It was this protracted period of bullying that eventually made a man of Murdoc, and in the process Murdoc earned himself the first of eight fractures to his now legendarily wonky nose. Murdoc, tiring of his persecutor, rounded on Tony Chopper, unleashing an unstoppable tirade of razor-sharp wit and bilious venom. This tidal wave of rudeness rose to a crescendo, climaxing with Murdoc informing Mr Tony Chopper that he was 'a useless bloated backward waste of space who would probably end up getting a job holding up For Sale signs on the corners of streets, only to then himself get fired and replaced by a bucket of soil.'

Murdoc: A pissed monkey would stand a better chance in life.

Pow!!! Tony's massive porky fist connected with Murdoc's face, shattering his nose and sending the young Niccals boy flying.

Success!!! At last! Murdoc had obviously hit a nerve in Chopper, his insults finally penetrating Chopper's thick stupid hide deeply enough to reduce Tony to a blubbering mound of mindless thuggery. Despite the bloody nose Murdoc knew he'd had him licked . . .

That day Murdoc skipped home merrily from school, the blood rolling down his broken, beaming face. He was on his way.

Honing his ability to highlight people's shortcomings gave our intrepid Murdoc a new-found confidence. Most of Murdoc's subsequent teenage years were spent in a boastful riot of larceny, joyriding, animal-baiting, fraud and arson, usually while knocking back bottles of Strongbow cider and shooting out windows with his air pistols. After a hard day's miscreant activity, Murdoc would then while away his evenings listening to records round his comrades' houses. It was here that, amongst other things, he discovered the deep, dark, dulcet joys of Black Sabbath. The Brummy metal band were a second epiphany for Murdoc, shining a luminous beacon of light through the darkness.

Murdoc began to imagine a golden future outside the festering, disease-ridden, bubonic hamlet that was the 'Stoke-upon-the-Trent'.

Murdoc: Black Sabbath's greatest hits collection 'We Sold Our Soul For Rock 'N' Roll'. Oh yeah, that turned my head right inside out. Actually, they were another catalyst for my venture into the old Satanism game. Them, Aleister Crowley, Anton La Vey, and a very ingenious 'do–it-yourself' A.C.M.E. Satanist kit I bought at a jumble sale. But the *very* first thing? See, there was this bloke hanging around the Arndale Centre, handing out leaflets, and I guess it was the whole 'riches-on-earth', 'sexual gluttony' thing, coupled with the opportunity for 'alcoholic excess' that first caught my eye. Aged sixteen, that's a very exciting proposition for a man on the move. So, as a look I tried it out, and you know what? It fitted me like a glove.

Heavy metal music and devil-worshipping became my favourite pastimes. My brother Hannibal's tastes were more dub and punk based, but I soaked it all up. Actually it was my love of The Clash that eventually opened up the world of dub reggae to me. But my first true love was always Heavy Metal. Lovely, thick, gooey, black metal. I don't think my brother liked it at all, though.

Hannibal Niccals broke Murdoc's nose for a second and third time. The crime on this occasion was playing Dio's 'We Rock' album on Hannibal's personal turntable.

Murdoc: He got me into a lot of good music. He's inside now though, for . . . er . . . stealing hubcaps, or something.

Not long after, Murdoc was pushed out of Sodsworth Comprehensive, leaving with only a single legitimate qualification – an International Baccalaureate in Anti-Social Anthropology.

Murdoc: Yeah, I'd studied other cultures, in quite minute detail, their behavioural patterns, the way they communicate and their cultural traditions. Then I kind of took the piss out of it. I passed that exam with flying colours.

However, the hallowed halls of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College were never to beckon him further.

Murdoc: The combination of my devilish charms, my rapier wit and my love of music all pointed me in the same direction. I decided there and then that I would spend my life as a star musician, sailing the high seas of Chianti, a-rocking and a-rolling round the world. I was a genie unleashed! Wit, charm, confidence and charisma became the weapons of my armoury and I was . . . unstoppable!

To seal the deal, I began making . . . *negotiations* with the big man below, if you get my drift. I knew I had what it takes to rule the airwaves, but it certainly doesn't hurt getting a little lift up from Beelzebub. So we came to an arrangement.

To mark that an agreement had been undertaken, Murdoc changed his middle name via deed poll from Alphonce to Faust.

And in return Murdoc took charge of Satan's own bass guitar, 'El Diablo'.

Murdoc: Great sound. Really twangy!

The contract between the two obviously bounced between lawyers for some length because, although the path ahead was now clear, it would be some time before Murdoc Niccals drank from the cup of success. Murdoc went through a variety of low-paid jobs in order to pay the rent required to stay in his father's home.

Murdoc: Er . . . gravedigger, soup-seller, telesales, part-time Christmas Santa, stealing the lead off church roofs . . .

That's not actually a job.

Murdoc: Well, it was hard work. Anyway, I needed the money.

How desperate did you get?

Murdoc: Well, I did think about giving Sir Alan Sugar a good vigorous 'tromboning' one time. I think £100 was the agreed sum. But at the last minute I thought, 'Fuck it. I'm better than that . . . ' He was just called Alan at the time. He still made me call him 'Sir' though.

Really?

Murdoc: Yeah. That story's totally true.

Throughout these years Murdoc formed many bands with various line-ups, none of which seemed to go anywhere. Among these was the terribly amateurish New Romantic band Patchouli Clark, a sad, pointless mixture of vaguely gothy keyboards and Murdoc's strangled-crow-like crooning. They were never signed.

Murdoc: Yeah, whatever. I always knew I was gonna be King of the World at some point but it didn't happen with my first band. Big deal. Keep reading.

Years upon years passed of unsuccessful attempts to crack stardom. Kiss 'n' Make Up, Bullworker, Crimson Backdraft, Motley Dude, The Burning Sensations, The Stupid Name Gang, Durango 95, Two's A Crowd . . . the list of shame goes on.

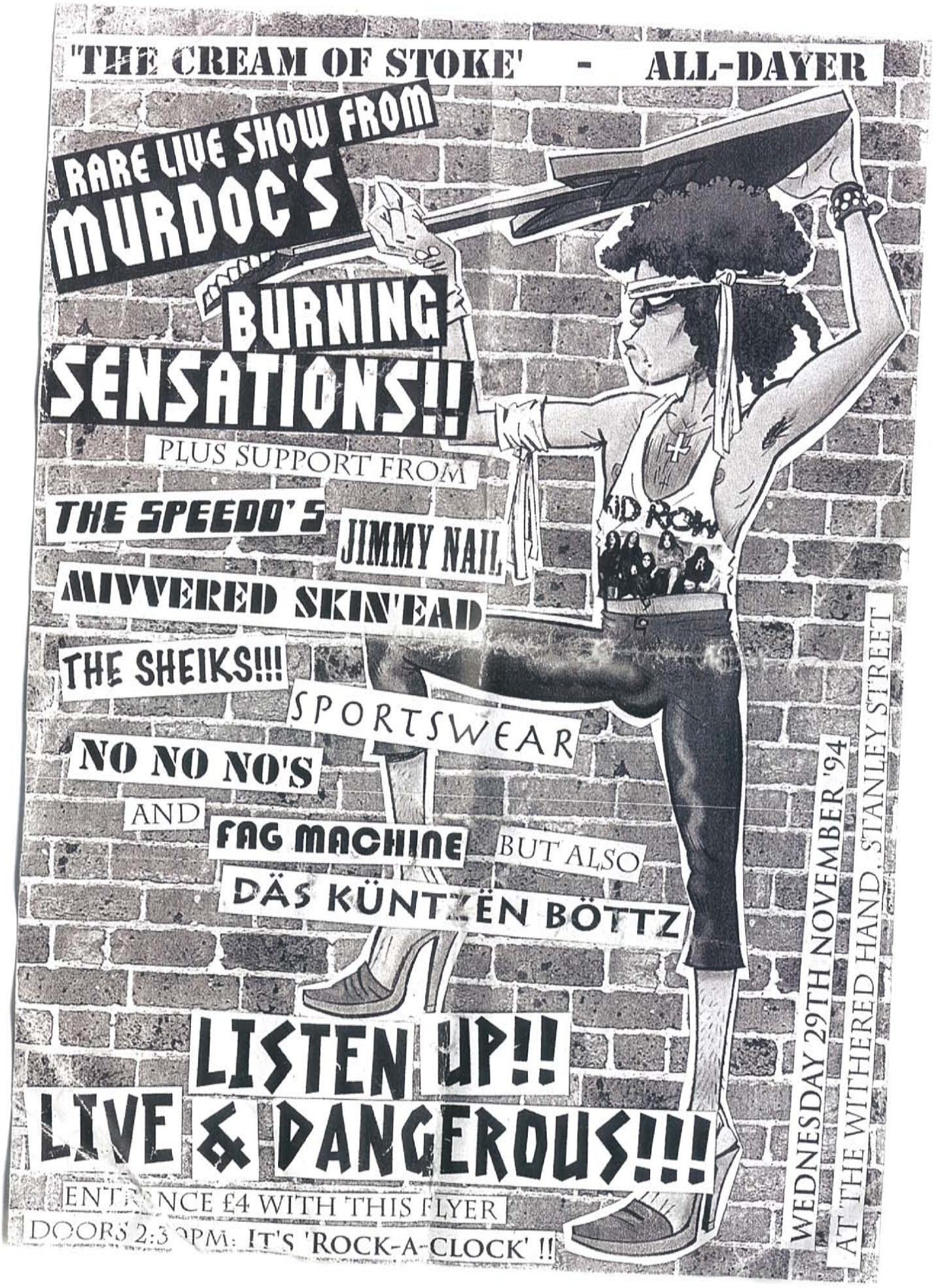
Murdoc: Eventually I knew I was wasting my time; casting pearls before swine. My voice is for the true connoisseur, the specialists, and I came to see that if I was going to communicate the full brilliance of my songwriting skills to the wide audience that they deserved, I was going to have to find someone with a more . . . conventional vocal talent . . . .

Someone who could sing, perhaps?

Murdoc: Look, right. The fact of the matter is that in 1997 the charts were a joke. These people wouldn't know decent music if it came up and smashed them round the chops. I had a plan that'd turn not only the Top 40, not just England, not just the music industry but the whole entire world on its head. Everything, ok? So cut the wisecracks and bear with me. This tale gets better and better, so just stick to writing the story, sunshine.

If Murdoc was ever to really realise his dream and escape the dirty, filthy, rotting, garbage-filled, putrid cesspit of Stoke-on-Trent, he was going to have to take his masterplan to another level. This meant recruiting a band worthy of his talents.

Meanwhile, in another part of England, Crawley New Town, a much, much better singer was taking shape . . .


'THE CREAM OF STOKE' - ALL-DAYER
RARE LIVE SHOW FROM
MURDOC'S
BURNING
SENSATIONS!!
PLUS SUPPORT FROM
THE SPEEDO'S
JIMMY NAIL
MIVVERED SKIN'EAD
THE SHEIKS!!!
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AT THE WITHERED HAND, STANLEY STREET

ABOVE

George A. Romero's 'Dawn of the Dead'

'A zombie masterpiece. George Romero is my Beatles' 2D

OPPOSITE

'This is a really old picture. I look totally different with eyeballs' 2D

12D3: In The Suburbs, They're Spooked

2D: I was more into films than music back then. 'Meantime', 'Scum' 'Made in Britain'. Know what I mean? Plus, I was a big fan of zombie flicks too. 'Dawn of the Dead', 'Evil Dead', 'Zombie Flesh Eaters'. I was well into Lucio Fulci, The Godfather of Gore. I really loved his film 'Zombie' and 'The Gates Of Hell' too. And George Romero's stuff was brilliant! I liked Cronenberg's 'Rabid' and 'The Brood'. Abel Ferrara's 'Driller Killer' was another cool film. 'The Exorcist' and 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre' are both great. Well scary. Oh, and 'Cannibal Massacre' too. But 'Dawn of the Dead' is still probably my favourite. I dunno what it is but something about zombies just really creeps me out. The way they move really slowly but they always seem to get you in the end. Really freaks me out, but that's why I watch 'em, I guess.

Stu-Pot (or Stuart Pot to give him his full name), was born on 23rd May 1978, the son of David and Rachel Pot. The Pots lived in a normal comfortable family home in Crawley New Town (or *Craw Leah*, meaning 'crow-infested clearing' as the original Saxon settlers named it).

Stuart was a polite, well-mannered boy, with little to say for himself. Less charitable people could possibly describe the young Stuart Pot as, maybe, a bit thick. His upbringing, like Stuart himself, was mainly unremarkable and uneventful. Other than the fact that both he and Murdoc were Horses in the Chinese Horoscope, they couldn't have come from more separated stock.

2D: I know there's a rumour going around that my real name is Stuart Tusspot or summfink, but that's not true. It's Pot. Stuart Pot.

David Pot: Actually, my name was orignally Tusspot, but having endured a lifetime of ridicule I thought, around the time of Stuart's birth, that I would shorten it to Pot. But deep down both myself and Stu are still Tusspots.

Also despite what Stu-Pot says, music, alongside films, had always played a large part in his life. David and Rachel Pot both recall Stuart as an excitable ten-year-old jumping around his bedroom to a noisy backdrop of The Jam, The Specials, The Clash, Wire and Buzzcocks. Early compilation tapes reveal he was also a fan of Jason Donovan, Five Star, Shakatak and Stu's favourite artists, The 'Human' League. He was also quite a keen melodica player, crafting simple but memorable melodies on his Hohner instrument in the style of his idol, Augustus Pablo.

2D: Oh yeah. Well, I forgot about all that.

When Stuart was 11 years old he fell out of a tree, landing on his head, causing a complete and total loss of bodily hair. When it did finally grow back, the natural colour was a vibrant azure blue.

Murdoc: Collars and cuffs?

2D looks down awkwardly, scratching his head.

His father, David, was a mechanic and all-round electronic tinker-er for fairground rides. Stuart's mother was a big-breasted nurse, and it was she who secured the endless supply of painkillers for the terrible migraines that Stuart suffered from. These attacks only got worse after the accident that was to fling Stuart and Murdoc's lives together so forcefully in later years.

Stuart Pot went to St Wilfred's school (co-incidentally the same school that had educated the members of spider-based indie-gothfather group The Cure), where, despite a marked lack of ambition and apparently limited intellect, Stuart was able to achieve fairly good grades.

2D: Well, you know what they say. *'A little knowledge is a wonderful thing.'* I hadn't really thought about what I wanted to do after school, though.

This is followed by a long pause.

2D: I never really thought about anything as far I can remember.

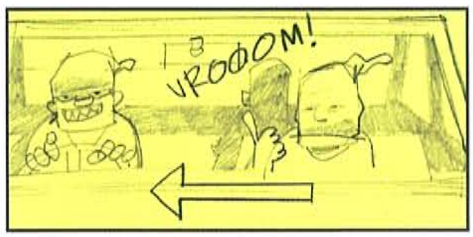
You do surprise me.

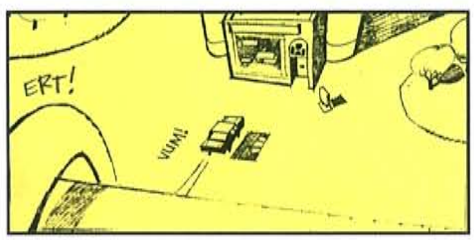
2D: I went through a period where I wanted to be a stormchaser, and recorded loads of videos off the TV of like, tornados and stuff. I liked messing about with keyboards, and bits of electronics. My dad used to help me customise bits of instruments so that I could make, like, new keyboard sounds and stuff. We'd use Stylophones, Moogs, old drum machines, anything electronic that made a noise, really. I had a Casio VL-tone that I thought was well crucial. I was just into playing around making bloopy noises, being a bit spacey. I can play you a tape I made ages ago if you want.

No, it's alright.

2D: I was a bit into painting too, messing around with graffiti and stuff. At one point I guess I wanted to be a vandal like that bloke Banksy. But apart from that, the odd game of Subbuteo, and my Saturday job, I had no real ambition to do much. I only got the Saturday job so I could raise enough to get The Euro 96 Subbuteo set. It had the all the Euro 96 balls, fences and players and a cool-looking box, which was bit like the USA 94 set box, which itself was like the Italia 90 box, except they . . .

Meanwhile, back in Stoke, Murdoc had fallen in with many a shady individual, assembling a gang of villainous scoundrels and cronies, all sods to a man. Tired of the endless monotony of dead-end jobs and hopeless rehearsals, he decided to 'crank up the crime' and put his masterplan into action . . .





August 15th 1997 'D-Day'

Murdoc: New gear, new singer, new band. That's what I needed. I had a bunch of great songs and demos. I knew they could tear the charts apart! But I also know that any song is only as good as the outfit playing them. So I set about assembling a killer band. They had to be the best or no dice. I decided to put it together the easy way. Ramraid the shop, hijack the gear, smash our way into the charts. Grab the chicks and slay the dragon, get it?

So, it was while Stu was working as a Saturday boy at Uncle Norm's Organ Emporium that his and Murdoc's worlds collided, top speed, in a very real way ...

Murdoc: Me and my gang of snaggle-toothed hardnuts decided that was enough. What we'd do is nick a car, burn it round town, build up a bit of speed and then launch it right through the music shop window, ramraid stylee!! That way, right, we could smash some stuff up, get all the latest equipment free, and have a laugh doing it. The fact that the car landed on 2D's face was just a bonus.

2D: I remember the day quite clearly actually. I was standing behind the counter, like, staring into space. I'd probably been in that position for three hours or so. Just standing there.

Murdoc: Like some kind of moron.

2D: Suddenly Murdoc came smashing through the wall of the building in his Vauxhall Astra, which lands bumper first on the side of my head.

Murdoc: Happy days! ... That's when your eye came out, wasn't it?

2D: Yeah. The first one. It didn't come out, it was pushed inward. Fractured. God, that hurt.

By driving his stolen Vauxhall Astra through the building and directly into Stu-Pot, Murdoc had permanently damaged Stu-Pot's left eye, also putting him into a deep catatonic state.

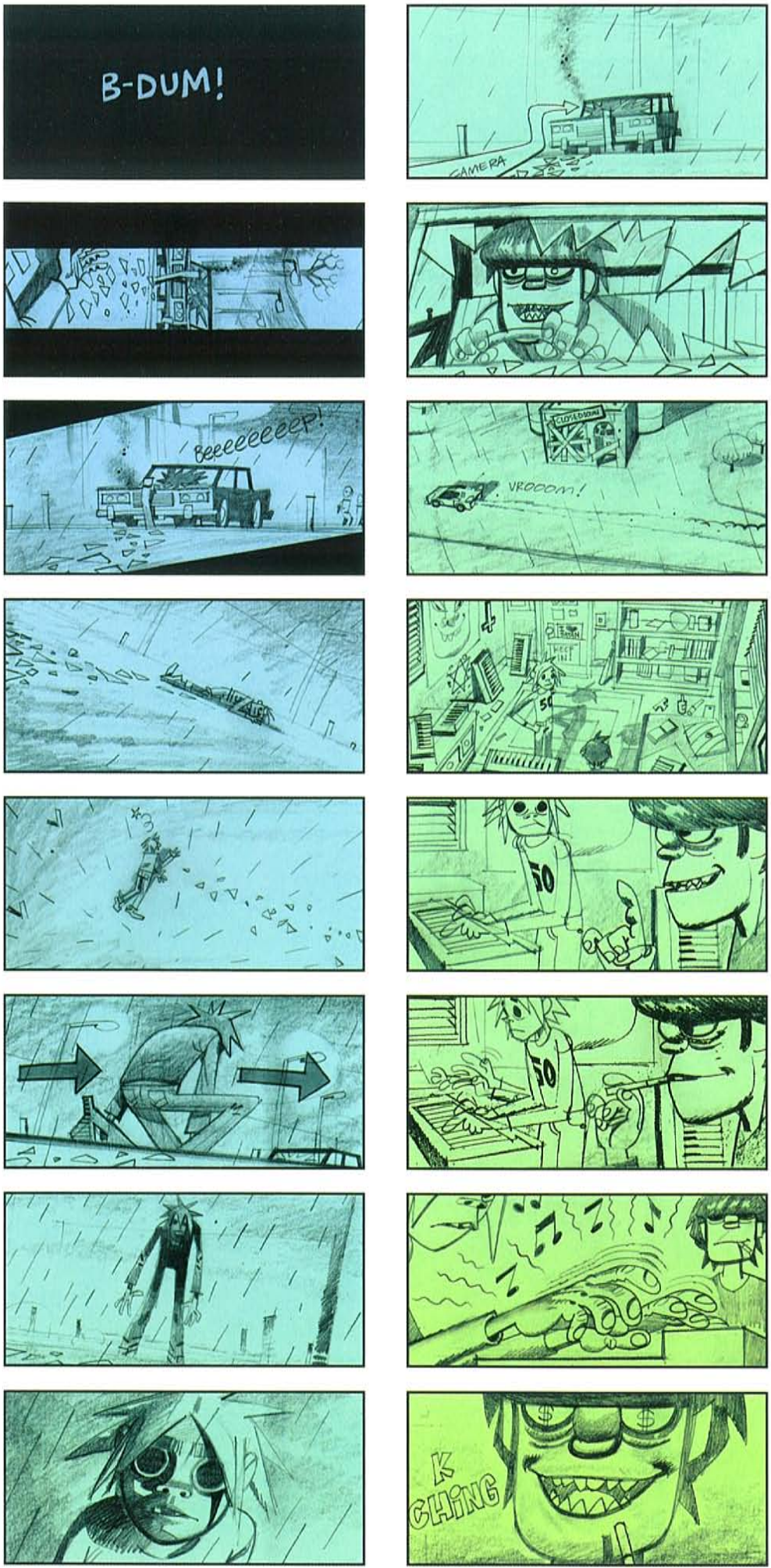
Murdoc: You were just a vegetable, instantly. If I hadn't a been laughing so much I probably would have heard the cops pulling up outside.

Murdoc was arrested and sentenced to '30,000 hours of community service, plus 10 hours every week of caring for the vegetabilised Stu-Pot'.

Murdoc: God bless the British Justice System, eh? Unbelievable! They put ME in charge of YOU. It was a bit of a drag, but we used to have a lot of fun during those sessions. You wouldn't remember that though. You were just a comatosed plank really. It was like looking after a bag of cement.

Murdoc's 'Care in the Community' service usually involved as much mistreatment of the deaf, dumb and blind Stuart Pot as Murdoc could squeeze into his appointed time-slot. Kicking, slapping, punching, dragging, dunking, catapulting ... nothing seemed to affect the catatonic kid. Until one incident went a little bit too far.

CRASH!
CRUNCH!
EXIT
VROOOM!
ERRT!
CAR ROLLS ACROSS SCREEN!
FROM RIGHT TO LEFT
50
VROO
VROOM!
VRAM!
50
5
VROOOM!
NOTTINGHAM
ERH
EXIT
VROOM!
50
CRASH!
SMASH!
ERH
VROOOM!
VROOOM!



Murdoc: We were in a car park in Nottingham, and I was pulling a whole load of very snazzy 360° donuts. I had a proper burn on, and was getting some good smoke off the tyres. The girls that were standing around were really impressed. So I thought I'd take it up a notch, took my foot off the brake and went for a grand finale. I was probably hitting about 90, when 2D got catapulted through the windscreen. He flew about 500 yards, landing face-first on a kerb. Er . . . ooops!

2D: Really?

Murdoc: Yeah. That's when your second eye went. You flew through the windscreen at 70 miles an hour, landing on your head once more. You skidded on your face for maybe half a mile, but when you came round, my God!

The impact of the accident had revived Stu-Pot from his state of paralysis, and in doing so gave us one of the greatest frontmen the world had ever seen!

Murdoc: He stood up really slowly, his back still towards me, and really slowly turned around, like one of the zombies in those films he watches, and there were . . . no eyes! Just two black holes, a vacant stare.

2D: That must have been pretty scary.

Murdoc: No, mate. I saw it! It looked great! A blue-haired, black-eyed God! The girls would go wild. I knew I had it. You were still a bit mental, but I had my frontman! Despite the mess, and the fact that half your face was hanging off, I could see that the girls would go crazy for his pretty-boy looks, so I made him the Gorillaz singer!

How could you not? There he stood before Murdoc, 'love's young deity': whippet-thin, spiky, deathly-white pallor, black-hole eyes. Awkward and angular, like a speed-ridden corpse with Grade Eight keyboard skills. Perfect!

Murdoc recruited the newly revived (albeit still mentally defective) Stu-Pot as the keyboardist and vocalist for his group, re-naming him '2D' in honour of the two dents that he now sported in his head, scars left by the twin Murdoc-induced car accidents.

Murdoc: Now I needed a drummer . . .

Of course. The backbone of any great outfit. Next stop, Soho.

Murdoc: Technically, though, my voice is a lot better than 2D's.

Russel Hobbs: Waking the Slumbering Giant

Russel: My first encounter with Murdoc really was when the bag went over my head. He asked me for some obscure 50's record and, er . . . I turned around to look for it. I was working behind the counter in Big Rick Black's Record Shack, in London's Soho area. I had my back turned to him for just a moment and that's when he slipped the sack over my head and bundled me out of the shop. It wasn't until it came off that I found myself at Kong Studios and that Murdoc Niccals was my assailant. But the music he played me was good enough to keep me there.

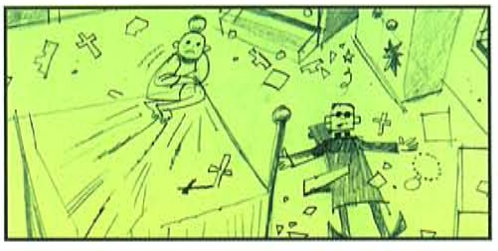
Enter Russel Hobbs, the Hip Hop Hardman from the US of A. Born in Brooklyn, NYC, on June 3rd 1975, Russel was properly raised to be considerate and well-spoken, with respect for those around him. If 2D was the looks, Murdoc the brains, then Russel truly was the heart. While Murdoc and 2D were into music, this dude Russel was a *musician*, whose knowledge of sound spanned the globe.

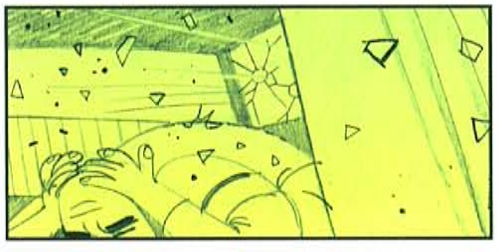
Trouble, however, had always followed Russel Hobbs around.

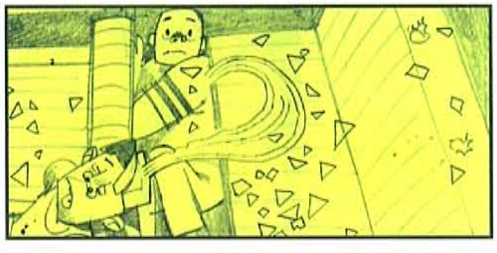
Murdoc: I'd heard about this hip hop maestro Hobbs, a one-man rhythm king who had been possessed by the ghosts of his dead friends. C'mon, how much press is that gonna get you? It's got everything! Hip hop, the undead, rapping spirits, deportation and a devastating drummer all rolled in to one big royalty cheque. No, baby, the second I heard about Russel Hobbs, I knew that he was going to be in my band. Whether he liked it or not . . .

Russel had been sent to England for his own safety, after all of his friends were suddenly gunned-down one night in a drive-by shooting. He recounts the tale in his deep, slow East Coast drawl.

Russel: It's still so vivid. The sound of the car coming round the back of us. Me and my friends were parked outside a 7-Eleven store, and it was raining real hard. We was minding our own business, you know. The Humvee, a big black Humvee kinda crawled round the back of our vehicle, and we just knew this was trouble . . .







2D: Go on, what happpened next?

Murdoc looks at 2D and rolls his eyes. 2D's heard this story 50, 60 times, and Murdoc knows it. He throws a hefty phone book at 2D, hitting him squarely on the back of the head.

Murdoc: Oi! Rain Man! Why don't you go and memorize this?

Getting Russel to go through this again was like sitting in on some tedious old fart's therapy session.

Russel: Gangbangers. The truck was full of them, all wearing red hooded tops, apart from one. His hood was black, his face completely in shadow. Then we noticed the barrel tips, just poking through the window. They opened fire and the night sky was ablaze, the gunfire from their Uzis just lit up the place. My friend Del died instantly, the others just . . . all of them died apart from me. For some reason the bullets never hit me . . .

2D: That's really strange.

Murdoc: You may have noticed that actually of lot of what happens to us isn't exactly normal, moron.

Russel: But from where I lay on the floor of the truck I could see his face, the one with the black hood . . . It was Death himself, incarnate. The Grim Reaper. That image will stay with me forever.

Murdoc: Er . . . great.

Russel: That was the first time I saw him.

Murdoc: Save it for the biography, Russ.

2D: But . . . I thought this is what we're . . .

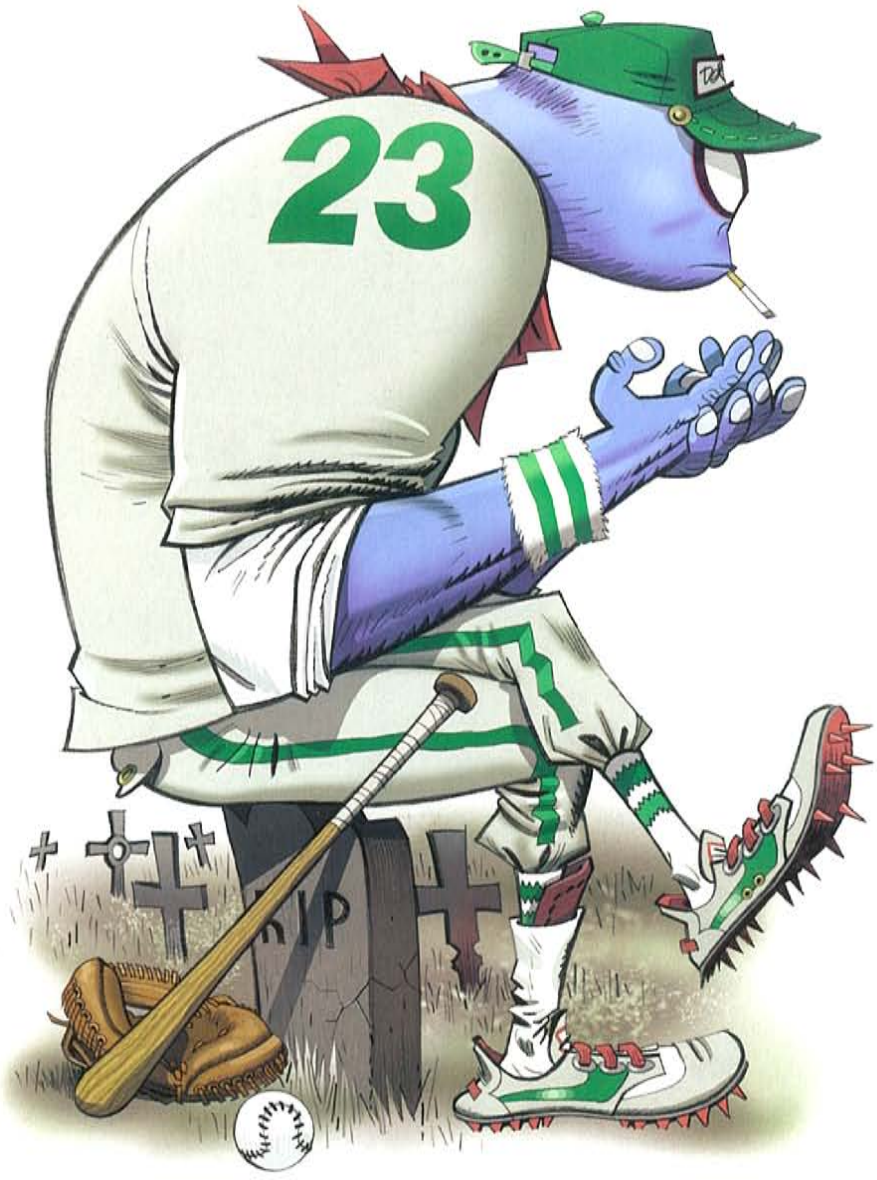
Russel: Immediately that's when all these spirits, the ghosts of my dead departed friends all entered my body, like they were being sucked up. Like sheets getting sucked into a vacuum cleaner. Bam! Bam! Whoosh!! Bam! Straight into me.

The process of possession turned Russel eyes a permanent frosted milky white. It also gave Russel his exceptional music skills, the friends in question being the ones he'd made after an earlier brush with the Demonic underworld, all musical supremos to a man.

Murdoc: So I dragged Russ back to the old –

Russel: Del. He was my true soulmate, my friend and brother. When he was killed his spirit took up residence inside me. He became the ghost rapper who appeared on the 'Clint Eastwood' record. But I've always been a receptacle for wayward spirits, demon apparitions . . .

Murdoc: Well, Russel, that's probably because of the size of vacant 'real estate' you offer.



ABOVE
Del, the Ghost Rapper
'From the day we met we were inseparable. Even after he died'
RUSSEL HOBBS

Russel: I think it's more that I guess I just kinda . . . vibrate at that frequency.

Murdoc: You wot?

Russel: I orginally used to go to a private school in New York, The Xavier School for Young Achievers, but I was removed from there by the faculty governers after an incident in which some of the other graduates were horribly mauled. Unknown to me at the time I was already possessed by a demon, and a big one too. One night in the campus dormitory apparently I swelled to twice my size, and went on a rampage, picked some of the kids up and threw them around like dolls. I wouldn't have believed it was me if I hadn't seen the 'Russel Hobbs woz 'ere' sign scrawled in blood in the school hall. It was definitely my signature.

Murdoc is shaking his head.

Murdoc: You're such a crackpot, Hobbs, you know that?

Russel: Take it easy, Muds, or I'm gonna pound ya, Brooklyn style. (Pause)

OWL
geep
Poot
DARK POP toys
MurphyKid
CAUTION
VOLCANIC FUMES ARE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH AND CAN BE LIFE-THREATENING
WATCH FOR TRUCKS
APEX
CASIO
APOLLO XII
LORD

Anyhow. I was expelled from the school but the possession and the anxiety sent me into a coma. I was unconscious for about four years until a Father Merrin exorcised the demon from my soul. That's when I came round.

The demon finally vanquished, Russel came to after four years in the comatose state. Unfortunately his old school refused to take him back.

Russel: That's when I went to Brooklyn High School, and met my new crowd. They were street musicians, rappers, DJ's and MC's. I learned so much so fast. Hip hop saved my life, my soul . . .

But this honeymoon period was not to last. The drive-by massacre not only killed his crew but also sealed his fate. His parents shipped him off to England, to his uncle's home in Belsize Park and to what they imagined would be relative safety.

Russel: I was sent here to convalesce, to recover and unwind . . .

Murdoc (smirking): But you didn't count on me tracking you down though, did you, mate? Oi! Russ. Didn't think that would happen, did you?

Among Russel's personal belongings that were shipped over was one that was to become a mainstay of the Gorillaz sonic arsenal . . . The legendary Hip Hop Machine!

Russel: That box contains every beat known to man. The thing's irreplaceable. It's the TARDIS of the hip hop world. Its rhythms span both time and history, right across the Universe. Never mess with that machine – it'll eat you whole.

As the big man says, the machine is a towering hybrid of every drum machine, beatbox, rhythm-track, breakbeat and sample ever created. The fact that it also contains the souls of many dead drummers that roll endlessly round its circuits, well, you can see why the box is so highly coveted. Now you can't buy that kind of equipment out the back of Exchange & Mart, can you?

With the inclusion of Russel in the band, Gorillaz' stock became boosted no end. He brought with him a love of hip hop, funk, dub, world music, Krautrock and more. From big band, bluegrass and booty bass to jazz, ska, white noise and reggae, his knowledge was infinite. More than this, his education and schooling in New York brought an understanding of the arts and literature, a tuition that spanned Busted, to Basquiat, to Bukowski.

It's an overused term but it would be possible to describe Russel as a true Renaissance man. Though I'm . . . um . . . not sure exactly what that really means.

Russel: It pertains to the Renaissance period, when a gentleman was expected to have a whole breadth of knowledge, talents in a wide range of fields. Unlike polymaths, who are people who excel in many fields. I'm a cross between the two. I'm a jack of all trades, but a master of drums . . .

What more could you ask for?

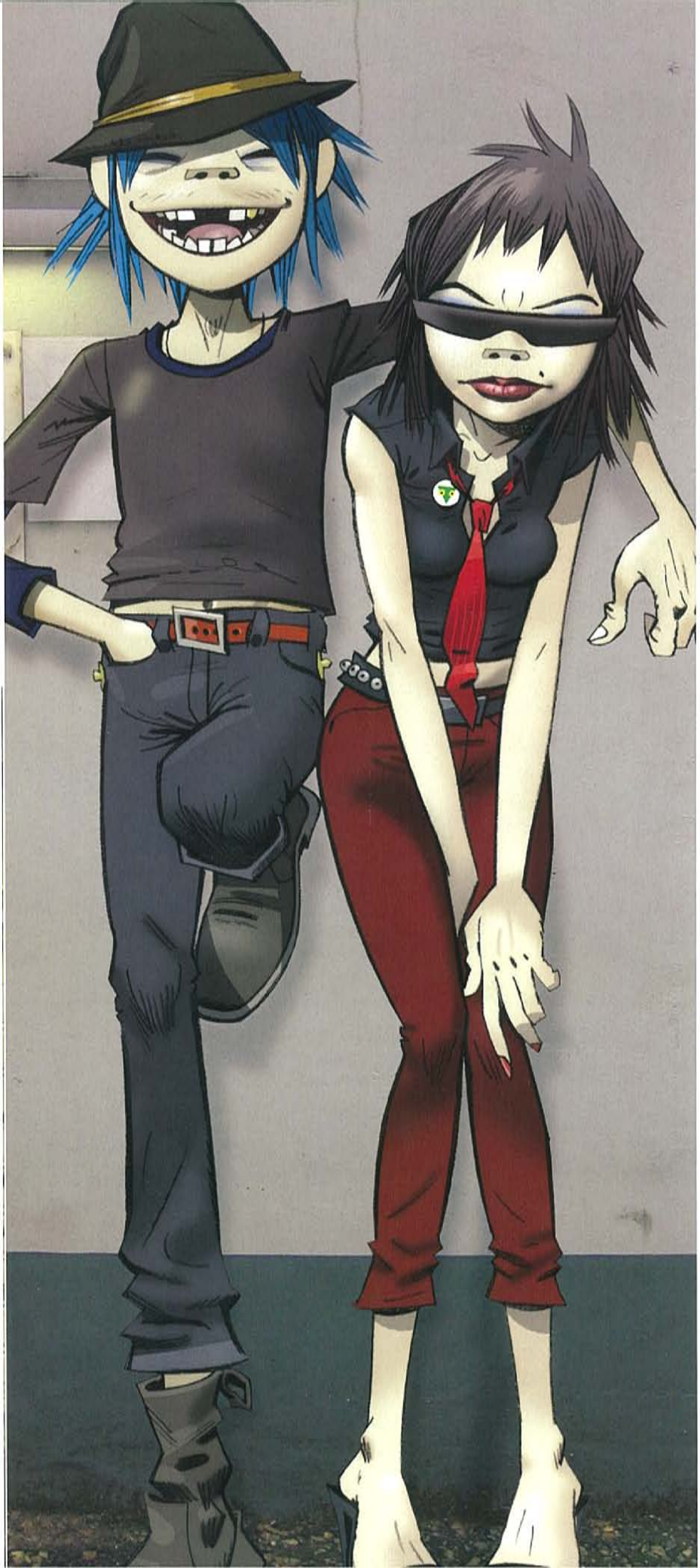
Murdoc: A decent guitarist?

The only weak link did appear to be Paula, the guitar player.

Murdoc: I think we can skip this bit.

Who's Paula?

Murdoc: It doesn't matter. It's history.



No, come on. Who's Paula?

Murdoc: (Sigh). Paula was this girl who played guitar for us early on, 2D had been seeing her . . .

2D: My girlfriend.

Murdoc: Whatever. But she . . . er . . . didn't really work out in the band.

After Russel joined the band Paula, 2D's girlfriend at the time, was drafted in to play guitar. But one night Russel found Murdoc and Paula up to no good together in the toilets at Kong.

Murdoc: Cubicle number 3, I seem to recall.

For this gross act of disloyalty, Russel broke Murdoc's nose a further five times, giving us the grand total of eight fractures that afflict his mangled hooter today.

Paula Cracker, Gorillaz' first guitarist: Yeah. Well, I'd been seeing Stu-Pot for about two months. I played a bit of guitar and used to buy strings from the shop he worked in. He was very sweet . . . A bit thick though. He said that he was gonna be a singer in this band, yeah? They didn't have a name yet, and I thought 'yeah, I've heard it all before.' Still, I went down to Kong Studios to check them out, and I've ended up playing with them. But when I saw Murdoc with his thick greasy hair, green teeth and yellow skin I thought 'Oooh! he's the one for me!!'

Paula becomes increasingly more animated. Maybe she's on some sort of medication.

Paula Cracker: Oh! He's such a dandy! Like Errol Flynn or something. But after the thing in the toilets, they kicked me out. Bastards. And I never heard from Murdoc again. And my purse was gone. Since then they've become this big massive band, so I guess I was pleased for them, but it also kind of makes me feel really, er . . . sick.

In the head. Like I want to ... hurt people. They tried to write me out of the story of Gorillaz. But I was the guitarist way before that Noodle. I've got half a mind to hunt them down, and start screwing with their heads.

I think she is on medication.

2D: I can't believe you did that, Murdoc

Murdoc: I did you a favour, mate. She was a rubbish-looking bird. Seriously, she looked like Grayson Perry or something. You're best shot of her.

2D (quietly): ... It's just the principle.

Murdoc: Look. She was depressingly ugly. Easily enough to put you off your dinner. You should thank me. Anyhow, on with the show ...

Noodle: A Very Special Delivery

So were where we? Oh yes, one step forwards, another one back. The still embryonic Gorillaz needed to find that missing link. Time to think fast. In time-honoured tradition Murdoc placed an ad in the backpages of the weekly musical institution that is the NME.

Murdoc: I read the wordings for the advert down the phone. 'Global phenomenon seek guitarist for World domination. Blah blah blah. GSOH required. No hippies etc ... ' No sooner had I put the phone down when there's a knock at the door. I open the door, no-one there.

In the deserted hallway stood only a 10ft high freight container marked FedEx. As Murdoc pushed the crate into the middle of the room, out from the box sprung Noodle, all three foot two of her.

2D: I've got to admit I wasn't really expecting that. We heard a knock at the studio door, and there's just this big box there. Out jumps a small Japanese person carrying a Les Paul. I couldn't make out a word she was saying. Just gibberish. But then she unleashed a massive guitar riff wot sounded like 200 demons screaming in Arabic. Brilliant! She ended it with a 20ft hi-karate jump. She bowed and said just one word. 'Noodle'.

Murdoc: That was it! The position was taken and my group was complete. You could feel this electricity running right through the four of us. Actually I took great joy in telling all the other nobheads who turned up for the job to sling their hooks.

The band change their name to Gorillaz. A legend is born!

2D: We weren't really Gorillaz until Noodle arrived.

Murdoc: Well, we went through a lot of names. But seeing as, musically, I wanted to swing through the jungle baring my arse, I thought Gorillaz was a perfect name.

ABOVE
'Sometimes good things come in big packages! I arrived in a FedEx crate'
NOODLE

OPPOSITE
2D and girlfriend Paula Cracker
'Happy times. That was before everything got ... all twisted and messy'
2D

GORILLAZ
PINK RABBIT SAYS
SHOOT
TO ILL

Noodle was the spirit and the joy. Even her amnesia and total lack of knowledge of her past could not cause a ripple to the joyful approach she took to life. Her presence perfectly balanced the exceptional individual components of this extraordinary group.

Russel: Despite the language problem you picked up pretty fast that Noodle was into music in a real way. She fitted right in; her guitar skills were phenomenal and she gave off a pure love. The fact that she had the ability to laugh at Murdoc really helped too.

The switch was thrown. Gorillaz are alive!!

And so to work! The band embarked on a relentless series of rehearsals, working deep in the belly of Kong.

Gorillaz cemented their sound almost immediately, recording themselves as they went. The very first track to materialize was an exhilarating gem named 'Ghost Train', a runaway juggernaut of a track and proof positive of the undeniable magic that this foursome possessed. Based around a sample from The Human League's 'Sound of the Crowd', and featuring some incomprehensible rap from 2D, the track was an absolute barnstormer and enough to get the major labels salivating uncontrollably.

Murdoc: I ran down to Snappy Snapps, bought a disposable camera, and fired off a couple of pics of the band. I put them, the 'Ghost Train' track, and a quick manifesto together and posted the package off to a certain Mr Whiffy Smiffy over at EMI. I included a little note just to let him know we were coming:

'Don't be a mug all your life. If you bungle this you're gonna feel like a dick. I've booked a gig, do yourself a favour and get yourself down there. I'm throwing you a rope here, sonny, don't louse it up . . . sign us up and you can sit on your arse for the rest of your life.'

Yeah, well, you know what I mean . . . You've got to set your stall up early. Establish the relationship early on. And I was right, so there you go. Gorillaz were to become the assassins of useless celebrity. A line was being drawn and these people had to decide which side of it they wanted to be on. 'Embrace the future or drown in the past'. Your choice.

2D: It did seem to do the trick. The phone started ringing immediately.

Murdoc: Well, we did look fantastic in that photo.

2D: Things were really picking up. Everyday was just another . . . uh . . . brilliant day. I'd met this other girl from S Club 7, Rachel Stevens, and we started going out together. She's really nice.

Murdoc: What does the 'S' stand for?

2D throws a look over to Murdoc. Murdoc winks. 2D looks down. More trouble, no doubt.

2D: I don't know. But anyway I invited her down to the gig we were doing at the Camden Brownhouse. It was our first gig so we were gonna pull out all the stops.

BELOW
Rachel Stevens, Ex-S Club 7
'I loved 2D. But Murdoc ruined it.'
RACHEL STEVENS

ABOVE
Mr Whiffy Smiffy, the A&R man who signed Gorillaz
'He can be very persuasive'
MURDOC NICCALS

The Camden Brownhouse

The Camden Brownhouse was a notorious venue that every no-hoper and junior never-will-be always played. But Gorillaz were different. Even on their first gig the energy and confidence were spectacular. Heavy-duty welding glasses were handed out at the door for the audience's own safety. To stare directly at the blazing sensation of Gorillaz in full flow was to take one's eyesight in one's own hands. They were that brilliant, see?

November 5th 1998 *Gorillaz play the Camden Brownhouse, their first concert as the Gorillaz line-up we now know and love*

The gig at the Camden Brownhouse was spectacular. Murdoc had loaded the evening upfront, already putting in the call to A&R man Whiffy Smiffy at EMI. 'Sign us at our first gig, man. It'll be great press for both of us, the kids will think some kind of phonenum ... phenomunen, ph ... some kind of movement's happening. Oh yeah, do something wicked that'll get us noticed.'

Whiffy Smiffy was an old hand at the music game, and despite signing the odd clunker this was a man who could take a Pepsi Challenge and come out sipping Cristal. When it came to bands, he knew his onions ...

Whiffy Smiffy, EMI: As soon as they played 'Punk', I knew I'd seen the future of music. It hit me round the face like a wet kipper against a shed door. Other labels had come down to check these Gorillaz out, but I brought my double-barrelled friend 'The Negotiator' down with me. No contest.

There was a riot, natch: Whiffy, with inimitable style, let off a few rounds from his pump-action sawn-off, forced his way through the crowds and grabbed those all-important signatures. Gorillaz were signed. One gig. One song.

November 6th 1998 *The Gorillaz record label signing party*

EMI, in their infinite wisdom, placed the band on their Parlophone label, the home of artists such as The Beatles, Radiohead, Kylie Minogue and The Goons. For the signing party the record label pulled out all the stops, with no expense being spared.

Murdoc: It was a very decadent bash, and from me that's saying something. They hired a palace and decked it out like a baroque bordello. Some bird with three knockers jumped out of a cake. Vodka flowed like Niagara falls, a couple of tigers on roller-skates had been thrown into the mix, to keep things 'exotic'. They also presented us with the cheque for the advance. Tackily, they gave us one of those really big, supersized cheques on cardboard or whatever it is. I can't tell you how much of a dick I felt carrying that down to Barclays. Although at least I can say I didn't lose it. How could I? It's enormous.

The evening gradually faded into a food fight, one so violent that 2D had an éclair pushed hard enough into his face to knock his tonsils out. However, the evening wasn't the total waste of time that these events so often are.

LIVE
MUSIC
SKY
SPORTS
CAMDEN BROWN HOUSE
CAMDEN
BROWN
HOUSE
CAMDEN
BROWN
HOUSE
TOURISTS
MOST
WELCOME

ABOVE
The young, cherubic Damon Albarn, Gorillaz cohort and frontman of Blur
'Is he or isn't he?'
MURDOC NICCALS

Smiffy had brought along some 'old-school back-up'. Ok, Gorillaz were good ... really really good, but there's no harm getting a little extra guidance when it comes to crunch time, eh readers?

Russel: Mr Whiffy introduced us to Damon Albarn, the singer from the British band Blur. Him and Murdoc didn't really get on immediately, due to the kind of competitive one-up-manship they both display. The first thing Damon said to Murdoc, pointing down at his boots, was, 'Your Cuban heels are crap. Look, mine are the proper sort'. Damon was wearing a pair like Murdoc's, but with solid silver heels and big fancy gold spurs. I think Murdoc was a bit humiliated. He's very proud of his shoes.

However, Gorillaz and Albarn swiftly became close friends, bonding over a mutual love of great music, coupled with a shared Genghis Khan-like sense of ambition. His support and input, despite what Murdoc maintains, has been an invaluable asset to Gorillaz from the outset. He became a paternal figure, sometime producer and an ingenious 'fixer' for the band. It was his knowledge of the industry that without a doubt helped Gorillaz avoid some of the more obvious pitfalls.

Murdoc, however, once again had more pressing matters to attend to that evening than hanging out talking about music. Mr Niccals had his thieving magpie eyes on 2D's new belle, the lovely young chanteuse Ms Rachel Stevens. He spent most of the evening lulling and beguiling her with his magical, intoxicating mantra 'Go on ... go on ... go on ... go on. Go on ... oh, go on.'

Finally, when she could resist his potent charms no more, she threw her drink in his face and stormed out. 2D and Rachel split up the next day due to Murdoc's incessant pestering.

2D: Cheers, mate ...

Murdoc: Get over it.

Rachel Stevens, ex S-Club 7: Stu-Pot, that's 2D's real name, erm, well, we were deeply in love, well, I mean I still do love him, but ... erm, it's just that Murdoc. Every time 2D's back was turned he was, like, trying it on with me and it kind of just ruined our relationship, you know, and actually, it ruined a couple of my t-shirts, come to think of it.

Having banked the 7ft cheque, Gorillaz wasted no time in decking out the Kong Studios shell with the hi-tech super-slick junk that you can see there today. Spazzed to the max, Gorillaz undertook the enviable task of recording the world's greatest debut with themselves at the helm.

Murdoc: If the ship crashes, well, there's no one else to blame but ourselves. Suits me fine.

November 31st 1998 *Gorillaz commence recording of the album at Kong Studios*

Whiffy set Murdoc, 2D, Russel and Noodle to task.

Whiffy: Gimme the goods and I'll do the same for you. Agreed?

Murdoc: Yeah, alright Smiffy. No need to sound all dramatic. That's what we agreed

GORILLAZ

EXIT

KUNG
FU
NOODLE

CINEMA

by signing the contract, surely. So keep your stupid ginger wig on, mate. I'm about to blow your mind.

A moment passed.

Whiffy: Er . . . it's not actually a wig. That's my real hair

Awkward silence.

Murdoc: Really?

Murdoc paused, momentarily stumped. He considered this, then regained his composure.

Murdoc: Look. It's not important. I'm just saying trust me, OK?

Gorillaz knocked out forty tracks, then cut them down to 15 mini-masterpieces.

The buzz around Gorillaz was spreading through the music world like wildfire. The new kids on the block were hot and everyone knew it. Despite every attempt to keep things under wraps until it was finished, the first in a long line of superstar collaborators popped round to 'borrow some sugar' from the residents of Kong Studios. And ended up appearing on the album.

The first up to the batter's mound?

Russel: Miho Hatori, the Japanese singer from Cibo Matto. She harmonized with Noodle on the vocals for 'Re-Hash'. The track became the opener for our debut album.

The History of Kong Studios

Now might be a good point to go into the history of Kong Studios, the fantastic Willy Wonka-type cathedral of crap that Gorillaz live in.

How the hell did Murdoc ever acquire such a grand decaying palace of sin before Gorillaz had even sold a single record?? Huh?! Well, we hear, here, now from the man himself, here.

Murdoc: Bin the thesaurus for a second and I'll tell you what happened. I was up late one night, scouring the internet. I was living in a freezing bedsit at the time. The heating had broken down and I was looking at a site about . . . er . . . 'dodgy boilers'. Uhmm . . . Anyway, I came across this website called Giganticdisusedhauntedstudiosinthemiddleofnowhere.com.

The owners were looking for an off-season 'caretaker' to look after the place during winter. They said in the ad that they'd be back in six months, but I got the impression that they were trying to get rid of the place for good. When I turned up at the interview, obviously the only applicant, they chucked the keys at me and then ran off down the hill screaming.

I just looked at the place and thought, 'Wow! I'm home! You can make as much noise as you like here!'

I initially used the place as a studio base where we put Gorillaz together, but it became our home, our headquarters, and also the 'online gateway' between us and our fans. Right from very early on in Gorillaz' career we made sure people had access to the joint. By hooking up cameras in every room people could check out what was going on at Kong Studios via the website Gorillaz.com.

The website, Gorillaz.com, has been incredibly well-received, winning many awards for its innovative and pioneering approach. From the date of its launch to the present day the Gorillaz website received more hits than all the other acts on the band's record label combined.

Noodle: We filled the place up with games, toys, videos and many interactive elements. We created message boards where our audience members and people who entered the website could talk to each other. We tried to be as creative and all-embracing as the technology would allow. We even left tapes and samples of our music lying around, allowing people to mix their own versions.

2D: Yeah, it's all very cool, but I'm a bit bothered about the number of people that can go into our bedrooms and touch our stuff. I think that's weird, really.

Between June 1st 2005 and June 1st 2006 alone, over 82 million rooms and games were visited at the site, and in June 2006 Gorillaz were awarded Webby Artists of the Year.

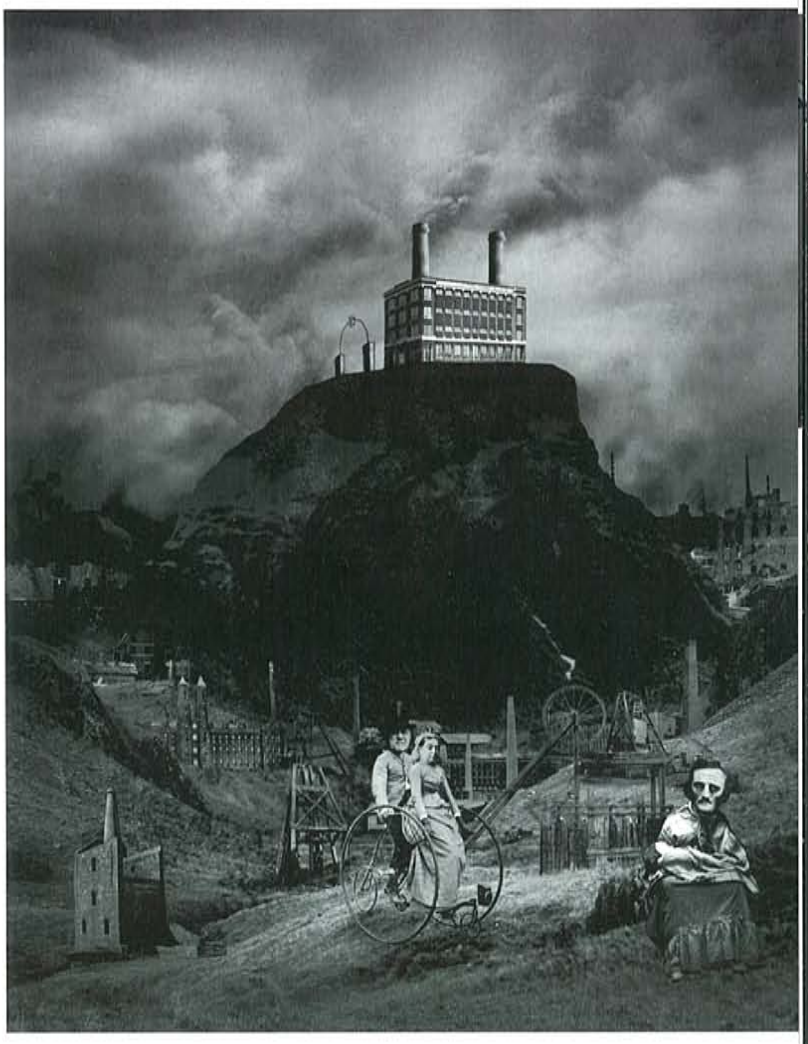
Murdoc: That's a bit like your house winning an Oscar.

Russel: Nearly every single aspect of Gorillaz is documented and archived here at Kong and Gorillaz.com. Our videos premiere online, we mail out all the info about what we're up to, we've run competitions from the site . . . it's endless.

This odd, spooky building continues to grow daily as new sections are constantly added, but its dark past and rent-free ownership remained a mystery until one night Noodle discovered the truth behind this haunted hilltop hellhole.

Deep in the bowels of Kong, Noodle came across an archive library room, where she learned the terrible legend of Kong Studios, a building with a chequered history that stretches far back . . .

Prior to any construction, the original site was a druids' meeting point, picked specially for its unique alignment of dark energies and hideous leylines. Various members of 'The Goat Klan' would converge on the Essex hilltop site at certain points in the lunar cycle and inhale vapours while tunelessly chanting into makeshift cauldrons.

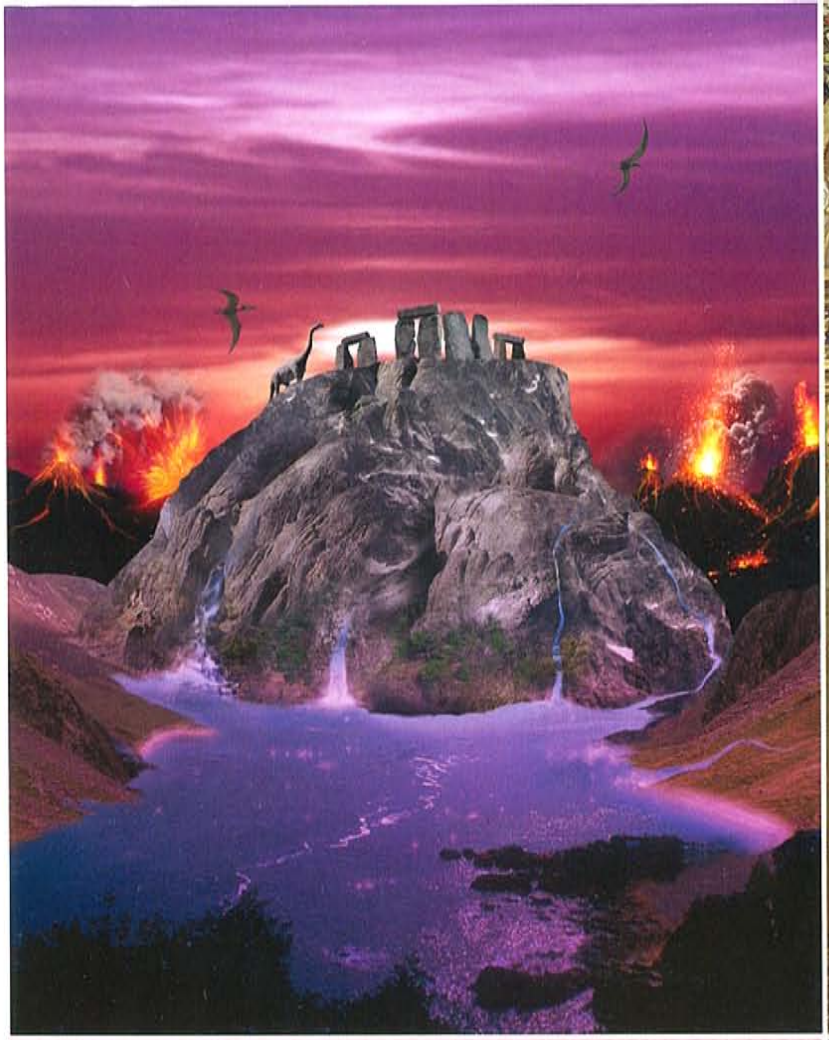


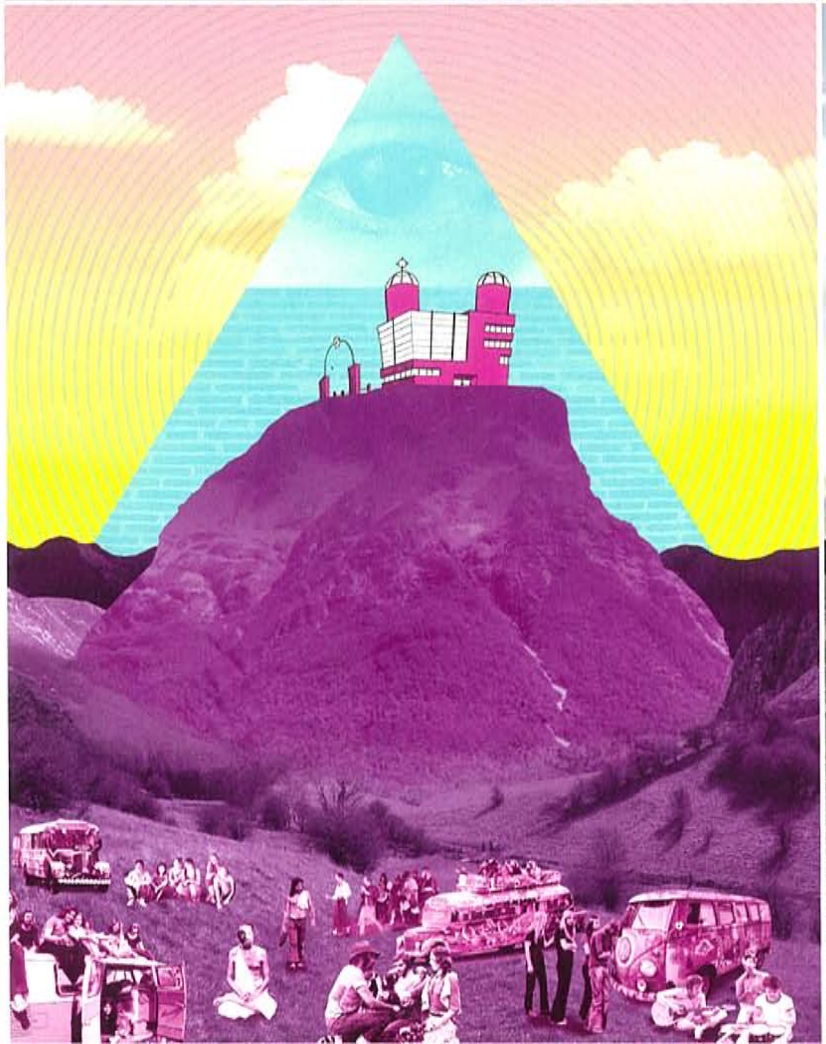
ABOVE

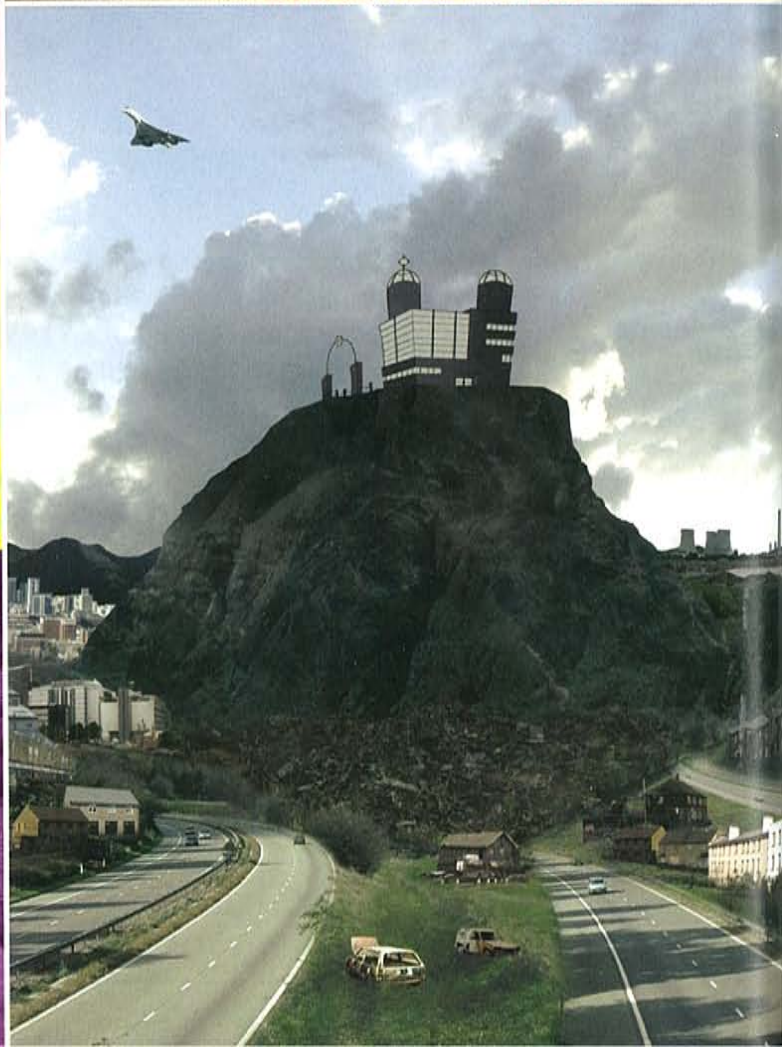
The Kong Studios building, circa 1896

'That's Aleister Crowley there, on the bike with Queen Victoria. And over in the corner, that's Edgar Allan Poe. Kong Studios has always attracted a lot of celebrities'

MURDOC NICCALS



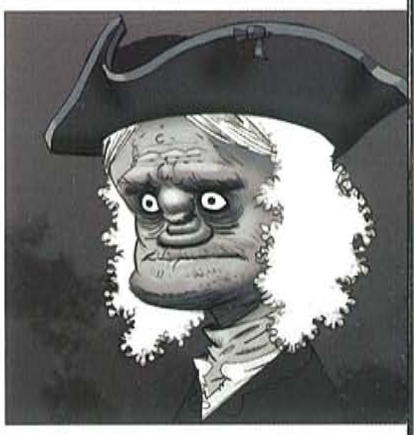




The first 'Khong' building was erected on top of an old disused cemetery. Many of the people who died in the Great Plague of 1665 were dumped there, in shallow graves and burial pits. Urgh!

The Khong Mansion which still stands today was built in 1749 to house the decadent hedonist Sir Emerick Khong, a giant barking brute of a man who would host the debauched, sadistic meetings of his 'King Khong Club'. Having satisfied their more physical desires, he and his fellow club members would sit around talking rubbish far into the night. It is said that his ghost still wanders around Kong Kitchens in the early hours, moaning in deep haunting tones for 'a glass of water'.

The current building is also situated next to one of the biggest landfill sites in the country. It's not just fridges, washing machines and tractor tyres. We're talking about old nappies, colostomy bags, mad cows and rotten alien torsos. In the middle of summer when the heat rises, the stench that oozes up through the soil from this pit is unbelievable! Like someone cooking turds or something.



ABOVE
Sir Emerick Khong, a man with an insatiable thirst

Prior to Gorillaz, the most recent owners were a bunch of Hell's Angels, a biker gang calling themselves The Nomads, who used the building as their clubhouse. One night back in '93 they held a massive party and invited Hell's Angels from all over the Midlands. The local police chief reckoned there must have been nearly 2,000 bikers crammed into the Hangar Room of Basement Number 3. However, when some of their meth-drinking frolics went haywire, a fire started. Someone had locked the main doors so no one could escape.

Murdoc: They all got burnt to a crisp!

Kong Studios is so stuffed full of dead stuff, bad karma and sick vibrations, it's no wonder that the place lay vacant for so long.

It was in the September of '98 when the fledgling, but ageing, rock star Murdoc Niccals picked the keys up and from that day forward Gorillaz and Kong were married together eternally. *'Bargain!'*

Murdoc: Kong Studios can do strange things to a man. It seems to be a magnet for weirdness, the paranormal, the malcontent and me. It has an effect on everyone who enters. Seriously, check the place out. It's just full of these freaks. Apparently one night Lenny Kravitz turned up and rested his balls in the face of a gay polar bear.

'CHECK IT OUT'

Murdoc: I love this gaff. It makes Batman's place look like some kind of cut-price Barratt home. Although the weather is always pretty grim round here. Always.

Noodle: So much of the Gorillaz' entire existence has been played out at Kong Studios. It has been a pivotal part of our lives. It seems sometimes like the building is impossible to escape from . . .

But more of that later. Let's get back to the main story. Where were we? Oh yes, Gorillaz are just about to make their first album . . .

GORILLAZ

Chapter 3
How to Build a Monster

'It's a sweet sensation, over the dub
Oh what a situation, that don't want to stop
It's the drugstore soulboy, over the dub
With the sweetest inspiration, we don't want to stop'

From beginning to end, the making of the Gorillaz' debut would be a mad dash of creativity, during which time they began to assemble the enormous family of cohorts that make up their numbers today.

The evolution of the album, born from Murdoc's shoddy demos, gathered pace at Kong. The studio was alive with the continual sound of banging, clattering, squelching, pounding, zapping, buzzing, siphoning and caterwauling . . . unfeasible sonics that no sane individual would create.

Night after night was spent lobbing machinery around, chucking ostrich eggs at sheets of metal and leaping into buckets; no experiment into sound was deemed too far-fetched.

Soon the framework of a very unusual album took shape. However, despite the quality and power of the Gorillaz' musicians, something was still missing. The skeleton needed flesh, blood and muscle.

Russel: I don't know whether or not it was the weather, the building or just the lack of air-conditioning at Kong Studios, but the record was quite murky. Downbeat even, in places. It needed a fresh set of ears to liven it up. You could hear there was a really vibrant collection of styles, the songs were strong, but it just needed someone to kinda yank the string and pull it all to life.

On Damon Albarn's recommendation, crazy madcap Japanese-American producer Dan Nakamura, aka 'The Automator', was brought in to provide 'extras'.

Damon had worked with the Automator on Dan's Deltron 3030 project, a collaboration between rapper Del tha Funkee Homosapien and DJ Kid Koala. The idea was that Dan would bring the extra heat needed to baste the Gorillaz beast.

With a virtual shepherd's crook, Gorillaz hauled the producer over from his San Francisco base and played him the tracks. He was immediately taken with Gorillaz, and could see where they needed to go.

Dan tactfully suggested that the original version of 'Clint Eastwood', which featured Murdoc's grating colourless atonal vocals, could maybe be improved by replacing these sections with a rap . . .

This seemed to trigger some kind of ghostly summoning; a brutal rumbling that shook the very foundations of Kong! As if ordering the Spanish Inquisition, out of the deep dark crevices of Russel's colossal frame, the phantom of Del erupted. Del had apparently lain dormant in Russel since the shooting years previously, but finally his hour had come.

The manifestation sent Russel back into a brief coma as the maverick rapper spirit delivered what would be a career-mutating vocal line.

Russel: That was like a bolt of electricity. My phantom friend, the undead spirit of Del, smashed his way out of my head and unleashed the rap on 'Clint Eastwood'. Then he did the same to 'Rock the House'. It just transformed the whole sound.

Dan's next move as producer was to book a holiday ... sorry, 're-locate the project' over to a studio in the sun-kissed sands of Jamaica, for overdubs and mixing.

April 16th – May 7th 2000 *Gorillaz sessions at GeeJam Studios, Jamaica*

It seemed to have the desired effect as the sun shone down upon the tracks adding light to the more shadowed areas and balancing out the darker textures with a golden, buoyant optimism.

Russel: Yeah. It was the right decision to take it over to Jamaica. Without that it would never have had any sunshine in it. It would have just been so bleak. But over there we got into a good routine. Got up late, worked for a few hours, had lunch, went to sleep, went to the beach for three hours or so, had dinner, then went to work till three or four in the morning. It was a relaxed way of working.

2D: Dan was wicked, man. It was like getting Daffy Duck in to polish your stereo. He made the whole thing just sound better.

Dan Nakamura: We went to Jamaica to record it because Gorillaz have got a lot of Jamaican dub influences and it seemed like a good place to do it. It was like a big party. Those guys are pretty wild.

Murdoc: I should have fired that goon out of a cannon. I was gonna produce that record myself.

Interview with Dan Nakamura from Seven Magazine, March 7th 2001

What were Gorillaz like?

Dan Nakamura: On the spot kind of guys. Full of ideas. They remind me of this TV show we used to have, 'Josie and the Pussycats'.

What were you listening to during the Gorillaz session?

Dan Nakamura: Whatever was on the radio and some older stuff; Augustus Pablo, The Beach Boys' Pet Sounds, some reggae, Bob Marley, Lee Perry, some rap records, Bill Withers and Al Green. We listened to a little bit of everything.

Any problems during the sessions?

Dan Nakamura: With every record you have stumbling block moments when it's not working or something. We might have had to put the odd song to rest for a while, but we were mainly having a good time. We enjoyed being together, we enjoyed working together and I think you can hear that on the record.

What were you looking for with Gorillaz?

Dan Nakamura: We weren't going for the hardcore hip hop end of things – more of a good fusion of what's going on today, a bit of hip hop, a bit of dub, a good melody, some of the traditional strengths of pop, and then put it all together and make a really interesting song.

Murdoc: That I wrote. OK. Stick it on and let's see how it sounds ...

'Gorillaz' – Song By Song

RE-HASH

The gloriously upbeat opener to the album, 'Re-Hash' comes complete with wonky electronica, a colourful acoustic groove and damaged guitars. The furious scratcher and remixer, Kid Koala, had been subpoenaed by Dan the Automator to assist Gorillaz' Russel Hobbs with deck skills. The first evidence of his work appeared on this track.

The lyrics were then assembled in a cut-and-paste manner with Murdoc writing phrases on magnets and with 2D then throwing them at a fridge.

2D: We threw a lot of ideas around and then whatever phrases stuck, we kept.

Russel: 2D's vocal, with some coaching from Albarn, sounded fuller and more confident. He'd lost a whole load of the thin reedy sound from the early rehearsals.

Noodle added to Miho Hatori's backing vocals, blending their golden harmonies perfectly with 2D's lead.

Murdoc: OK. For the bass sound on this I took my amp and placed it underwater, inside a fish tank in a room on the floor above. Then we held a mic up to the ceiling below and recorded the noise coming through, all muffled and well dubby.

2D then got busy with a variety of the amateur instruments: Moog bleeps, theramins, extra backing vocals, some dubby delays and deep sub-bass sonar noises. Lastly, 2D added a broken sitar line to give it that extra dash of weirdness.

Meanwhile, while 2D was up to all this rubbish, Murdoc legged it down to the local school playground, and rounded up some kids with a big lasso. Then he bullied them into singing on the track.

The resulting combination was deemed an appropriate first track. One down.

Noodle: We sound like we were allowed to run riot! Such an innocent joy.

Murdoc: As I said, love, I was like a genie unleashed.

2D (mumbling softly): There's a difference between being a genie, and just being trapped in a bottle.

Thwack!! Murdoc throws a blow to 2D's chin that dislocates his jaw, leaving his face hanging open like a gaping door. Russel ignores the bickering.

Russel: When you think what we'd turned into by the second album, it's amazing to hear how positive and clean this sounds.

5/4

The second track becomes a spiky showdown; like Godzilla versus the hulking King Kong, Noodle and 2D battle it out for centre stage, with the vocals singing of magic, silent heartbeats, cities and suicide.

Murdoc: Oh yeah . . . You can hear it all falling into place now. *'She turned my dad ooonnn!!!!'*

Noodle: Murdoc always maintains that I am playing my guitar out of time, but he's mistaken. It's in 5/4 timing; which explains the title.

Murdoc: It's out of time, love. Listen to it. It's only saved by some excellent, one-fingered, new wave keyboards from 2D. He's just superb when he's like that. Just reminds you why he's in the band. Also, right, I needed to get a proper dirty fuzz coming off the bass for this track, so I kicked a big hole in the speaker cabinet and just let the torn flappy speaker cone buzz away. I got the sound I wanted pretty well straight away.

2D: The timing throws me a bit on this. It's like patting your head and rubbing your tummy at the same time. Bit difficult.

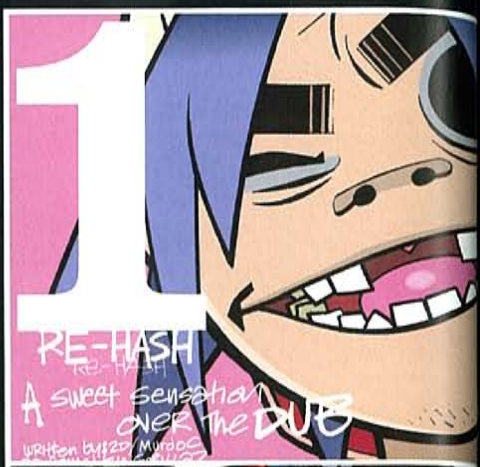
Murdoc: Why don't you just sing the song instead? Div.

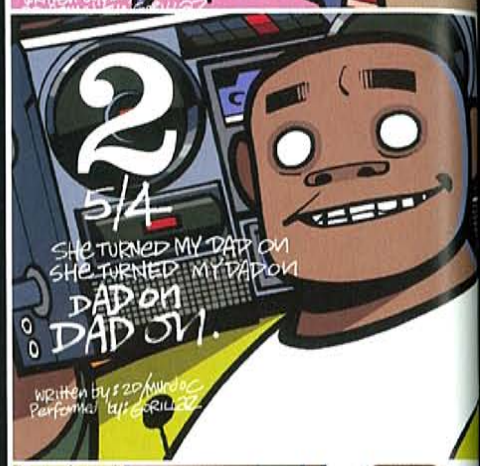
TOMORROW COMES TODAY

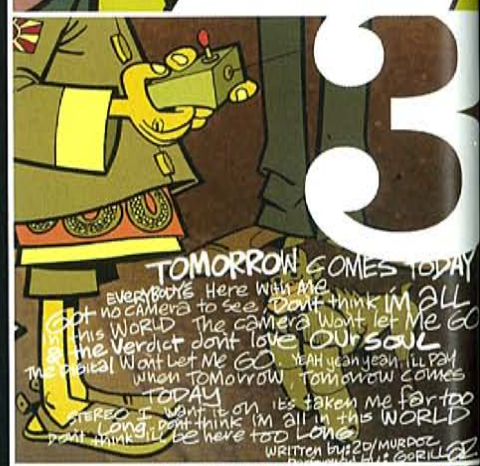
An ominous rumble in the urban jungle, this claustrophobic upsetter features a multi-tracked bass combination composed of various sub-sonics; keyboard and bass guitar parts feed through pedals to drop it down by a further octave or two. The end concoction is enough to disturb the workings of your middle ear.

2D: Very soundtracky, this. Sounds like a, er . . . French film that's been blurred. It's about, kind of, sort of, surveillance cameras and stuff. 'Tomorrow comes today' it's just like . . . things that you think, 'Oh well, I'll put that off', actually you can't put it off. But it's just a load of phrases that come after each other. A lot of it was just whatever came into my head, then we stuck it together and we pasted it with another bit that sounded good. It just had to work, it didn't have to mean anything.

Murdoc: I'm going to say the word . . . 'Noir'.






3
TOMORROW COMES TODAY
Everybody's Here With Me
no camera to see, Don't think IM ALL
this WORLD The camera Won't let Me GO
the Verdict don't love OUR SOUL
Want Let Me GO. YEAH yeah yeah ILL PAY
When TOMORROW TOMORROW COMES
TODAY
STEREO I want it on ITS taken me for too
Long, I don't think IM all in this WORLD
I'll be here too Long

2D: What?

Murdoc: 'Noir'. There, done it.

2D: You can hear the spirits of Kong resurrected during this track. Sounds like monks chanting . . . it's well creepy.

Murdoc: That's actually the ghost of Sir Emerick Khong. He had this place built so he could host his endless parties. But his spirit now wanders the corridors, hungover for all eternity. That moaning you hear on the track is his dehydrated soul clutching his head, looking for painkillers . . .

2D: *'I'll pay with tomorrow. Tomorrow comes today'.* Hmmm. I wanted to . . .

Murdoc: While 2D was laying down the vocal, I went off to the bog for a quick slash. I was whistling in the corridor, which the mic picked up. When we played it back I thought it sounded a bit, you know, 'Morricone', like something off a western. I like the combo, with the urban imagery and the cowboy-style whistling. Like a 'Wild West London' soundtrack.

2D: Underneath all that concrete it's probably just desert anyway . . .

NEW GENIOUS

Taking a sample of Bo Diddley's performance of Odetta's 'Hit or Miss', Russel bumped up the beat with some extra programming, formulating an intricate, twisting rhythm around which 2D could showcase his mournful falsetto.

This haunting, doleful number summoned up maudlin images of rain-filled alleyways and nocturnal movements. The lyrics advise caution and suggest a growing sense of suspicion. *'Brother, sister too/ Do what you must do/ Don't trust people you meet'.*

2D: Actually, this is directed at Murdoc.

Murdoc: Er . . . look. I know all this stuff back to front. I've heard it a million times. Can I just nip off to the pub for half an hour and come back when you've finished?

No. We're only doing this once.

CLINT EASTWOOD

Introduced by a count of four cymbal smashes, this lolloping, woozy, woolly mammoth-like dub became Gorillaz' big signature tune. The loose swaggering lyrical talents of Del, the Ghost Rapper, appear on this track. 2D offers up a snake-charming Augustus Pablo meets Ennio Morricone melodica line which caps the track off nicely.

Murdoc: If this was any more catchy then we'd have to invent a vaccine. Bird flu's got less chance of infecting the planet than this.

2D: Funnily enough I had a cold when I dropped this vocal . . . really works though.

Murdoc: Where did this track come from? Well, I pushed the button marked 'reggae setting' on my Honda Z-Chord autoharp, turned the knob from 'flop' to 'hit' and, Bob's yer uncle, out popped this little classic.

2D: I started fiddling around with my melodica, Russel took the good bits, Murdoc wrote the melody and then I sang it.

2D: We called the first single 'Clint Eastwood', because it had a kind of 'The Good, The Bad and The Ugly' feel to the melodica line. Kind of like Ennio Morricone as I said before. Also because of the dub feel, 'Clint Eastwood' was a tip of the hat to all the 1970s reggae stars who used names like that.

MAN RESEARCH

Opening on a backdrop of crickets and an intro reminiscent of The Clash's 'Straight To Hell', we're dumped right into the middle of a swampy lysergic dub.

By layering up a collage of vocals, 2D creates his own call-and-response anthem, bouncing between jubilant falsetto and a knackered-out croak.

Russel: Sounds like someone booming out over a vast expanse of jungle and space . . . This track's gotta real hallucinogenic quality to it.

Murdoc: Sounds like *someone* had been at the ether bottle that day.

The 2D vocal choir multiplies, building to a full animated army of voices marching round the track like those, er . . . broomsticks that carry water around in 'Fantasia'. Or something.

PUNK

Clocking in at 1 minute and 36 seconds, this is an energetic shot in the arm midway through the record. The intro picks up what sounds suspiciously like someone being sick.

Murdoc: 'Punk'? Well it does what it says on the tin. The claps you hear on the track were provided by the geriatrics from the local Essex Bowling club. I took my DAT player down there and got them all to clap along. You should have seen their faces. Grinning like a bunch of retards. They obviously don't get out much. I paid them in boiled sweets.

Russel: I just wanted something real short and snappy on here. And also this was the track that got us signed so it had to go on the album really. This song was pretty well completed start to finish back in Essex, before we'd left for Jamaica.

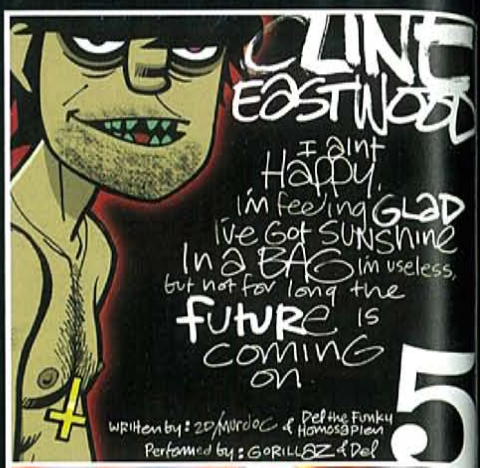
Noodle's Gibson six-string sword makes lean work of the chords.

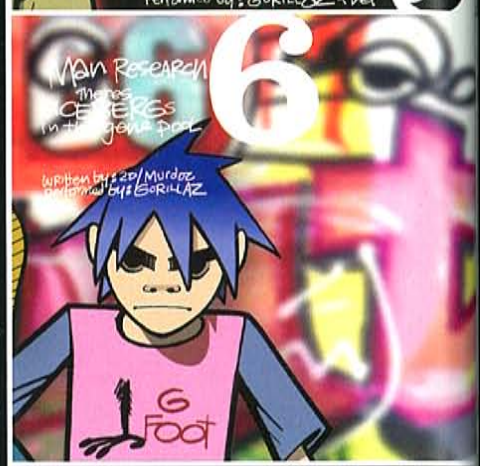
Russel: The original version was well over an hour long, but we cut it down to this.

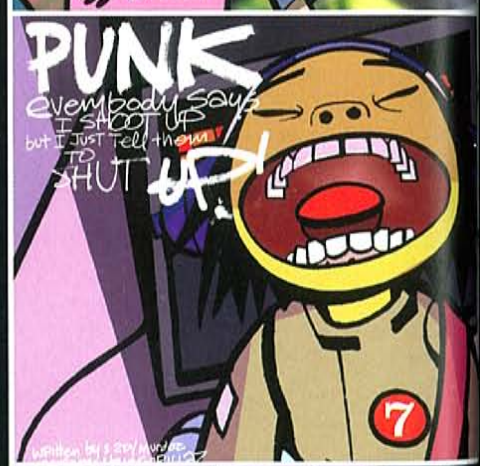
Murdoc: I like this one. 2D sounds like he's gone a bit mental.

2D: I had. I'd been looking for my front door keys for ages and eventually I just lost it big time. I had a total fit.

Murdoc: Every album needs a track like this. Or I'm not buying it.







SOUND CHECK (GRAVITY)

Another venture into the world of digital dub reggae for Gorillaz. 2D intones over a druggy, dopey, groove, *'Gravity on me never let me down gently/ Gravity with me never let me go no no Gravity'*. Combining the roots, the rock and the reggae, Gorillaz gave the album a well-placed breather.

2D: Oh, that was nice because I actually sang that, you can hear, it sounds like it was sung outside. It was sung out on top of the roof of the hut next to the beach in Jamaica at 2 o'clock in the morning, the cicadas and a full, starry sky and I was just out there for hours and I was just singing about the universe, really . . .

Russel: This track was recorded in the middle of the night – 2D and Noodle were sitting up on the roof of the wooden hotel they were staying in. The crickets were humming underneath the light from the moon, and the Dictaphone that Noodle used to record this picked the insects up too.

Murdoc: That explains the large royalty cheque that went out to 'The Jamaican Wildlife' the other day. Right?

Dan the Automator drafted in the Koala Kid again to drop all the vinyl scratches and breaks.

Russel: I wanted some kinda feel reminiscent of the Hank Shocklee Bomb Squad. Just a dense, dense wall of scratching.

Murdoc: Russel's decks caught fire here; he was shakin' and bakin' so hard his vinyl melted.

Notably, this track features bass contributions from Junior Dan, a dub bass legend whose previous clients included Burning Spear, Lee Scratch Perry, King Tubby and Bob Marley. Which when you think about it ain't a bad line-up, really.

Murdoc: I overslept one day and this guy, Junior Dan, came in and played the bass. How do I feel about it? Let me say this . . . You should never touch another man's bass. I *strongly* advise against it.

DOUBLE BASS

Track nine is a mentally unsteady piece of inebriated breakbeat psychedelia. Russel reveals its remarkable inception.

Russel: This is actually quite interesting, how we got this track. I'd bought this great little thing, a tiny microphone with a suckerpad on the end from Tandy, the electrical store. When you place it against the side of someone's head, it picks up and records the sounds of their thoughts. It literally transforms what they're imagining into music. Good for sampling.

Murdoc: I told 2D: 'Imagine 1950s-based rockabilly Brian Setzer from The Stray Cats knocking back a load of cough syrup, then going to a fairground with a

couple of mates. Halfway through, Brian's going to start feeling a bit sick because he's now drunk some Jagermeister, and the thick gooey brown liquid's making him see things that aren't there. He's trapped in a mad world of fairgrounds, visuals, and bubbles. What does that sound like in your head?'

Russel: This is the sound that 2D imagined. We added nothing to it. Other than Damon Albarn's voice, for the break, where he goes:

'All of this makes me anxious. At times unbearably so.'

2D: I've always had a bit of fairground 'rock-a-billy' in me . . . Seriously. My dad works at a fairground in Eastbourne. It's my roots, hence 'Ghost Train' too. The Wurlitzer, arcades, Ferris wheels; my head's full of all that stuff. For some reason I was also imagining the sounds from the old Atari game, Pong.

Murdoc: Can we speed this up a bit? I don't know how much more I can take.

ROCK THE HOUSE

Featuring another rubber-limbed, lethargic rap from the drawling Ghostly Del, the lyrics hit the track with slow-motion precision. Backed by a deft and nimble rhythm of brass stabs and snare cracks, Gorillaz once more implore you all to 'just get down'.

Murdoc: I won this song in a raffle.

Russel: The main break came courtesy of John Dankworth's 'Modesty Blaise'.

Murdoc: I wouldn't say 'courtesy'. I think we actually had to bung him a fair few quid for the pleasure.

2D: 'Rock the House' really shouldn't have been on the record, it's the one thing on that record that I really don't like. It's nothing to do with me, really. I think I played some divvy panpipes on it.

Murdoc: Panpipes?! Nobody told me there were bloody panpipes on this. I can't leave the room for a second, can I?

Russel: This is a great track, but without the presence of 2D's vocal, it only kinda does half the job of 'Clint Eastwood'.

Murdoc: I'm sorry, Russ, you've lost me here, mate. This just sounds like Yogi Bear. *'Shake and Bake, do whatever it takes'*?. I've haven't got a Scooby about what your ghostly pal's on about here, and I suspect neither do you.

19-2000

The second single proper from Gorillaz' debut, '19-2000' motors around like a hip pop collage of bleeps, bloops and big fat breaks.

2D: I sampled the riff for the keyboard off my alarm clock. We looped it up and it sounded kinda weird. The lyrics . . . well it's just very abstract . . . '*Get the cool shoeshine*'. Very deep but also, like, very facile.

Murdoc: Hmmm. There's a fine line between 'clever' and 'stupid', right?

2D: Oh yeah . . . yeah, I think so. Definitely.

Miho Hatori appears again for the chorus, with an added contribution from Tina Weymouth.

Russel: Dan sent some tracks to ex-Talking Heads and Tom Tom Club member Tina Weymouth, who added her vocals to the mix. She recorded them on to a CD and then sent them back over. Dan then dropped them onto the track, and kinda mixed them in with Noodle's and Miho's. The blend worked really nicely.

Murdoc: Also, you can see what we did with the title, right. 1998, 1999, 19-2000. See?

LATIN SIMONE

Gorillaz' wonderfully vibrant, smoky Cuban track, featuring a stunning vocal from Buena Vista Social Club's Ibrahim Ferrer. This took Gorillaz' sonic palette to a whole different continent.

Russel: That tune, 'Latin Simone', it had a vaguely Latin feel to it and I just was in love with the Buena Vista record and Ibrahim's voice. It was through a guy called Nick Gold from the World Circuit record label that we connected with Ibrahim. I posted the track through his letterbox and asked if he could help us out.

The added texture of the Latin style stretched the sound of the album across a far bigger canvas.

2D: We never wrote Ibrahim's lyrics for him. He sort of took the vague sentiment of what I . . . I had a line that was 'what's the matter with me?' and that changed to '*que pasa contigo?*' We let him do his own thing, really. The melody he wrote was slightly different to the one I'd written, so it became a different thing, but I like that. That's all good.

Russel: This is quite . . . something, listening to this. It was a great sadness to hear of his passing in 2005. He was a wonderful, warm soul, whose purity could be heard in the elegant expressive quality of that incredible voice. He generously lent his voice to this track and it was a fantastic honour to work with him; an experience none of us will forget. A magical soul.

STARSHINE

A slow reggae track, with a hypnotic beat and a creeping guitar riff . . .

Murdoc: Can you hear how well I'm playing my bass? I had to use two fingers for that.

2D: 'Starshine'. I really enjoyed making that record 'cos I really didn't spend too much time on it, I didn't really write any lyrics. I just got up and did it.

Murdoc: You just kind of opened your mouth and all this sound flew out?

2D: That's what I remember, yeah.

Murdoc jumps up, startled.

Murdoc: A ghost just pulled my hat off.

The rest of Gorillaz ignore him.

Murdoc: Seriously. I was sitting here talking to you lot, and a ghost just knocked my hat right off. Look, it's on the ground.

Russel: Sit down, Muds. You're going nowhere till we've finished this.

Murdoc huffs back to his seat clearly disinterested in continuing.

SLOW COUNTRY

'Slow Country' is a gentle breeze of a song, wistful and reflective, sounding like a melody thrown against summer wind. But underneath the upbeat outer shell, again a sense of unease is revealed. 2D croons *'Moving out of city/ Better have a second chance/ Kicked a lot of problems, we kicked a lot of them . . . / Can't stand the loneliness . . .'*

Murdoc: Cheer up, you miserable bastard. It might never happen.

The track dissolves into a 2D free-styling vocal skit and downbeat keyboards.

Murdoc: Why the hell did you do all that Muppets 'manamana' crap at the end? That was going really well up till then.

2D: I was just singing along. I didn't know that the mic was on.

M1 A1

The final track on the record opens with a foreboding sample from zombie flick 'Day of the Dead', creating an eerie sense of isolation. The tension builds slowly, the guitar rising to a nail-biting crescendo, before the full force of the Gorillaz live band explodes across the stereo.

2D: Me and Russel got together one afternoon and I showed him loads of the films that I'm into. All these knackered-out old zombie films. There's something that, like, resonates in me, really haunting, the same thing I get with music. This sense of, like, being the only conscious soul. The difficulty in communicating makes you feel like you're trapped under ice. Searching, lost and . . . dislocated.

Plus I like all the gory bits where they, like, eat each other's heads and stuff.

Russel: I picked up on what the blue-haired boy was trynna say, so I took this sample. We used to open our live set with it . . . it just sets the scene. You're the lone soul searching for life. It's a trick we used a couple of times . . .

2D: Lyrically I think I was trying to capture a sense of movement, speed and geography. 'M1 A1', you know? To place Gorillaz metaphorically zooming down the great British motorway of life.

Murdoc: What are you talking about? I wrote the lyrics to this. Jesus!! How many more times?! I've always been a big Howard Devoto fan and was listening to Magazine while driving up to Stoke to see my Grandma on Christmas Day. The motorway was completely empty and it reminded me of Romero's 'Day of the Dead', so I sort of stuck that all together and came up with 'M1 A1'. Empty motorways always alarm me and suggest . . . imminent zombie attack.

Noodle: I triple-tracked the guitars to make it sound like there was a bagful of cats being dragged behind a car. Then I screamed over the top.

Murdoc: Phew! Finished. That was it. Fifteen tracks of solid gold.

As the original press release stated, the album was a multi-faced corker:

'Ten months and close to thirty tracks later, Gorillaz delivered their dark pop classic. Kinky, wild, seductive with far-flung influences ranging from Jamaican Dub to New-York Hip-Hop, from Cuban love songs to South London scum-punk, the Gorillaz first long player was an eye-ear-and-mind opener and a genuine milestone along rock's long highway. Gorillaz meld their diverse backgrounds and far-flung influences, their various styles and impressive talent to make a subversive, modern, yet utterly accessible sound. This is the record you'll put on to get up, get down, get off and get it on with the lover of your dreams. A shoo-in for the Mercury Prize were it not for the fact that half of Gorillaz are Johnny Foreigners. Totally hot. Totally cool.'

With the help of their collaborators, a far bigger construction had been assembled than originally envisioned. This colossal and wonky creation, the Gorillaz' debut, once planned to be a fifteen-floor sky-scraper, was now a multi-dimensioned Gaudi house of sound.

June 2nd 2000 *Gorillaz album mastered by Howie Weinberg at Masterdisk, New York.*

Murdoc: Sure as shinola, we knew we had that baby in the bag.

So next stop . . . 'Hotel Stardom'.

Murdoc: Yup! *'Get my room ready, I'll be in the bar'.*

BELOW
Clockwise from top: Ibrahim Ferrer, Dan Nakamura, Kid Koala, Junior Dan

ABOVE
Gorillaz in Jamaica, 2000
'I took this picture when I was flat on my back, after falling out of a stupid tree'
MURDOC NICCALS

Unleashing the Beast – Tomorrow Comes Today

'We wound the thing up as far as it would go ... then we turned it loose' RUSSEL HOBBS

With the album signed, sealed and delivered, Russel and Noodle returned to the UK, to source some directors for Gorillaz' first video promo. Meanwhile, Murdoc and 2D stayed on in Jamaica to relax, and chill out. However, some of Murdoc's tomfoolery backfired ...

Murdoc: I was shinning my way up a coconut tree, looking for some bottles of Malibu when I fell out. I landed on my back, slipping a couple of discs. We were due to fly back the next day to record the video, which we almost had to cancel.

Ah, yes. The groundbreaking 'Tomorrow Comes Today' video ...

According to the original story of Gorillaz, when the call went out to directors for Gorillaz' first promotional film, 'one voice came back loud and clear above all others. That name was Paulo Skinbacio, auteur and founder of the now legendary "Quattro Frammagio Manifesto" technique of film-making. The legendary Italian Director had, according to the press release, been behind such landmarks in contemporary Latin Cinema as: Boom Ho-Lio (My Mind and Her Mother) and Stop Now, It's Hurting.'

The truth is these films have never existed. Paulo, 78, was a mouthy novice who had never been on a video shoot in his life. Chaos reigned supreme on the set, and the promo Mr Skinbacio filmed premiered in a garbage bin outside the record company office.

Murdoc: You've got to be very careful not to confuse being an eccentric genius with just being a bit senile . . .

Russel: Actually, the man was a bumbling buffoon who had never held a camera in his life.

Noodle: Yes. He was a total madman.

Therefore, under cover of night, two men, Jamie Hewlett and Mat Wakeham, were snuck into Kong Studios, a thick grey blanket concealing their identities. This was essential to avoid detection by the now psychotic, rambling and fully-armed Skinbacio. On the loose, he raged that if anyone dare to touch his work, his 'baby', his *'meister-arbeiten'* and *'Vorlagenarbeit'*, he would have them torn apart by dogs. This was disturbing for many reasons. One being that the legendary 'Italian' director was now resorting to German, and secondly that it was a shonky, 'Babel-Fished' version. Best steer clear altogether.

It was for this reason that local troublemaker Jamie Hewlett, the mythical cartoonist and co-creator of female headcase comic book character Tank Girl, was brought in to rescue this cinematic floater from the U-bend of history. His close friend and one-time flatmate Damon Albarn had suggested Jamie's name, and although Hewlett came with no prior experience of shooting pop promos, Albarn's intuition correctly assessed that this was the right man for the job.

Damon Albarn: This was the right man for the job.

Er . . . yeah, I just said that. Gorillaz were initially unsure about going with an animated feel, which may explain the heavy use of live footage in the first Gorillaz videos.

2D: We just thought it was a little early in our career to come across like some kind of 'cartoon band'. So there's more live footage in this one than all of our future videos.

A little persuasion later, however, changed their mind, and the creative partnership between Gorillaz and Jamie would become a solid unbreakable bond, one that went on to bear earthshaking fruit. The visual side of Gorillaz became one of the chief components and irreplaceable assets in promoting Gorillaz' music worldwide. Murdoc still views Hewlett as 'on trial'.

Murdoc: Listen. You're only as good as your last video. If Hewlett mucks one up, he's out. I'll get Skinbacio back in if I have to.

Due to the reticence of the band to commit fully to an animated output, for the 'Tomorrow Comes Today' promo Jamie dispatched Mat Wakeham to film

ABOVE
Jamie Hewlett, Gorillaz cohort and Tank Girl artist
'Excuse me, mate! Can I have a go on your collars?'
MURDOC NICCALS

footage of the London landscape; its backstreets, alleyways and the neon-soaked nightlife. The Gorillaz' musicians would also be filmed simultaneously at various locations around the city.

Murdoc: Yeah, I remember that.

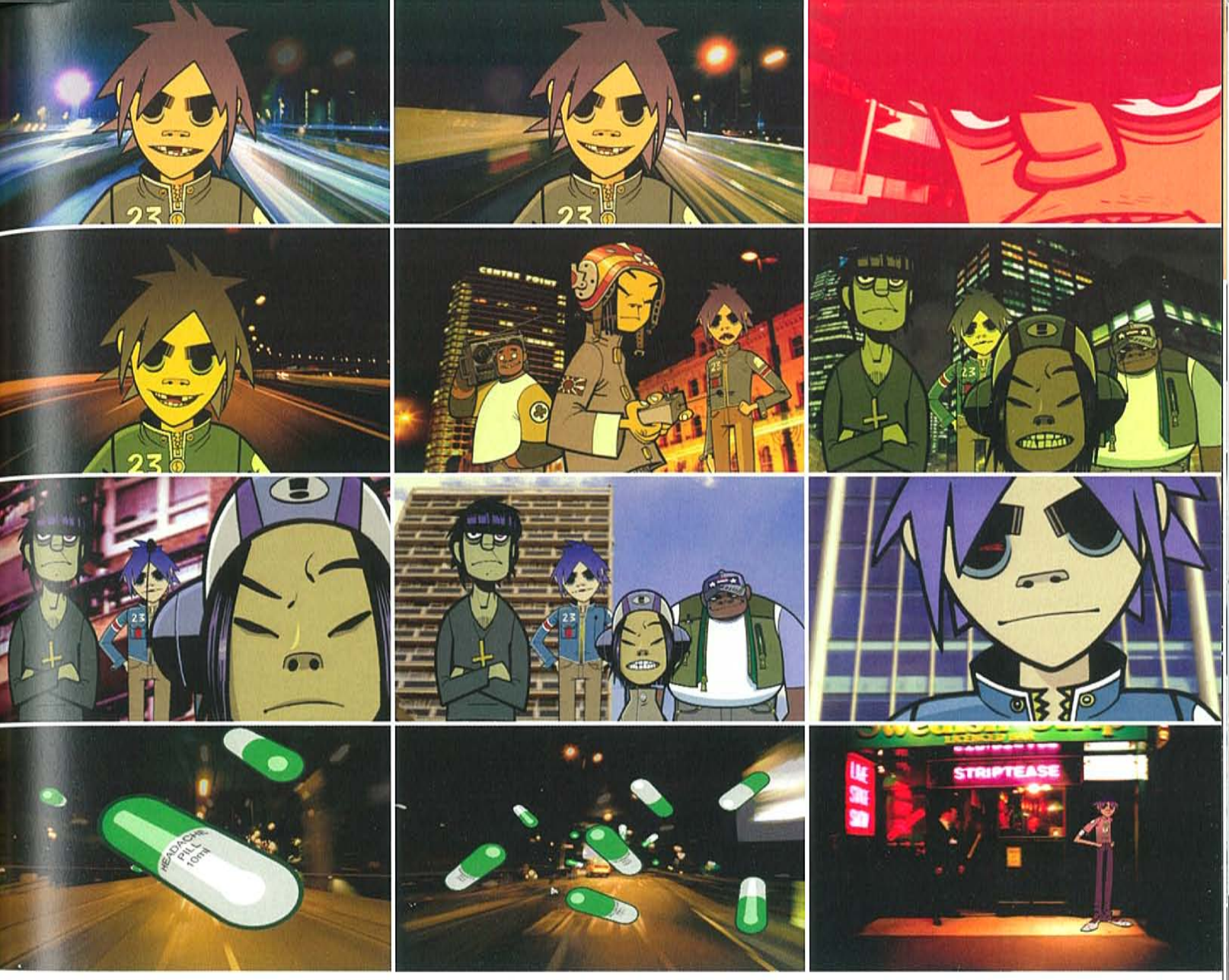
2D: Well done.

Murdoc: Don't get smart with me, sunbeam. I was up for this approach of placing us over a backdrop of the city at night. Something about it said, 'Sexy, edgy, dangerous'. If you Google my name, those are the first three words you'll see.

2D: It's amazing how young we look in this.

The dense collage of the cityscape, the Westway, Soho and housing estates, summoned up a feeling of speed, claustrophobia, melancholy and excitement. The Gorillaz' characters seeming to be both a product of and a reaction to this setting.

Murdoc: I filmed my bits early on so I got the evening off. I went down to loads of great bars in Soho, and could still get away with a lot of rubbish. In some ways this was the best of times. My reputation didn't quite precede me so loudly then . . .



This was the point that the animation company Passion Pictures were drafted in to complete some post-production effects, making the characters appear to merge into the urban scenery ...

Jamie Hewlett: They had these new machines in London called Inferno, and at the time there were only eight people in London who could operate them, and with that you could do loads of really clever effects with still drawings and photographs and stuff. And this Inferno machine allowed us to do loads of crazy effects, like warp the pictures, which at the time looked amazing, but you could probably do it in Photoshop now ... but at the time it was ... WOW!

Jamie had worked with Passion Pictures previously.

Murdoc (making juvenile trumpet noises): We interrupt this broadcast to bring you a short information reel from Passion Pictures' head, Andrew Ruhemann. Go on then, mate! How did you start working with Gorillaz?

Andrew Ruhemann, Passion Pictures: It started because Jamie and Passion did a commercial together, and then we were pitching on another one that never actually happened. After we'd come away from some meeting at an ad agency, Jamie said, 'I've got a project that I'd love to talk to you about – it's one I've been working on with my flatmate.' Little did I know that Jamie's flatmate was Damon Albarn of Blur fame!

When I sat down with him he said he had this idea for a band, these are the characters, what do you think? I said – it sounds fantastic. Fantastic because Jamie's designs were amazing and I knew that any animator worth their salt would fall over themselves to get to work with them. That on its own would not be enough – put it with dodgy music and it would have been a real uphill struggle – but put it with someone of the calibre of Damon and you've got a dream team. So it started in a café with Jamie saying, 'here's an idea, what do you think?'

Murdoc: Hmm . . . It's wonderful to hear first hand how quickly the credit for my band Gorillaz became some else's 'idea'. I guess though that it proves we were on to a winner from the start.

The low-budget video confirmed everyone's beliefs. The Gorillaz were naturals in front of the camera, their individual identities pushed to the foreground revealing four distinct personalities. Hewlett and co had pulled it off.

Noodle: The video was sent out to much of the world's media with a cover that had us in silhouette.

Murdoc: Even then just our shadows were iconic.

December 27th 2000 *The 'Tomorrow Comes Today' EP is released*

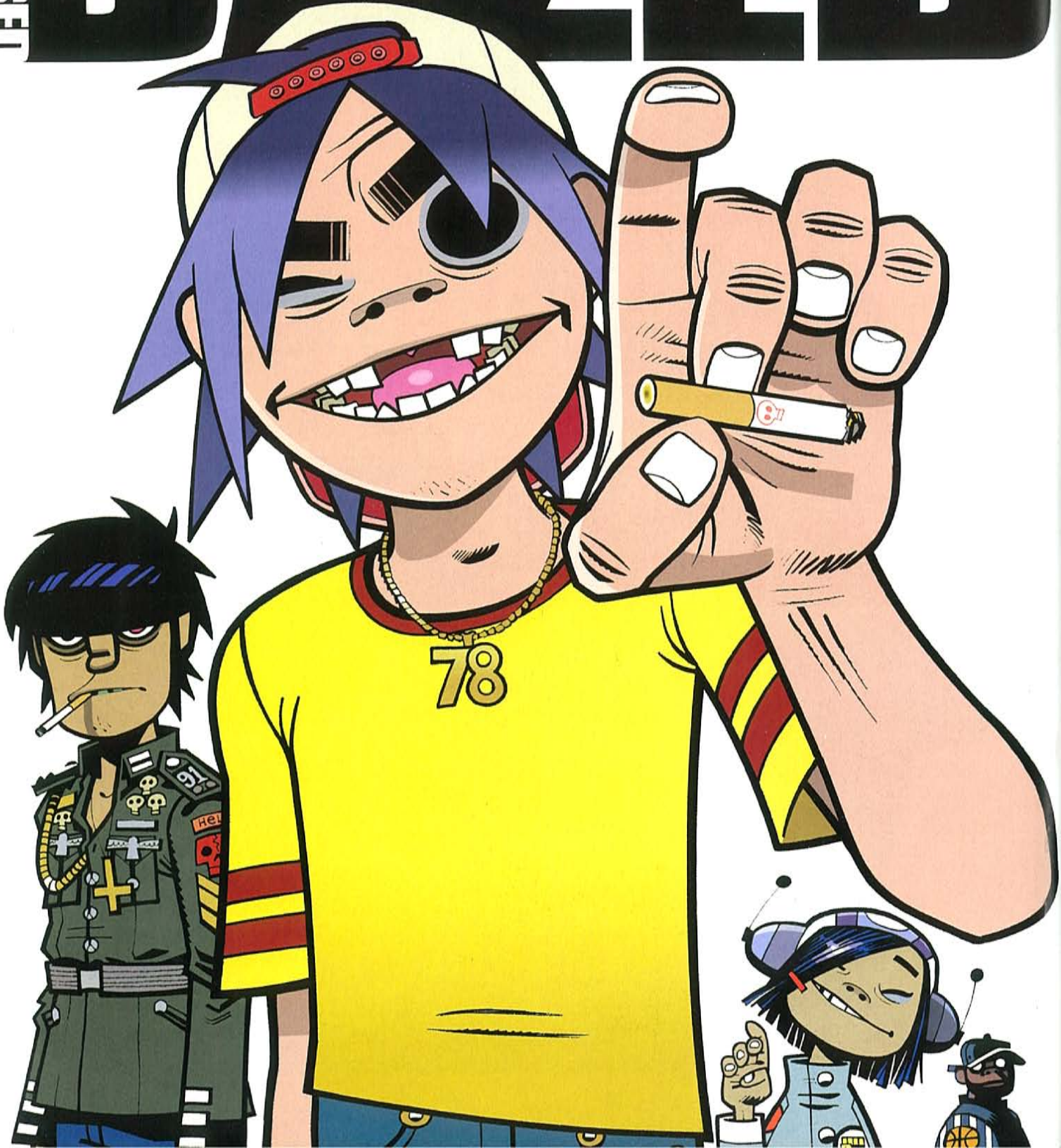
Dan Nakamura: Tomorrow *is* today, is the whole point. Everything we imagined that would be wild and crazy in the future has come to pass, like tomorrow has already come. The track has got a good flavour, it's a good introduction to Gorillaz; it's meant to be thought-provoking without preaching.

Murdoc: I'm not being funny, but could you, like, stop talking to Dan Nakamura.

Sorry.

LEFT
'Tomorrow Comes Today' promo sleeve
'That'll look great when it's finished'
MURDOC NICCALS

DAZED



Virtual Crack for the Stereo

December 6th 2000 *Worldwide media debut in Dazed & Confused magazine*

With both their debut album and video in the bag, Gorillaz launched the next battleship in their global campaign: an assault on the world's printed media.

The hip style magazine Dazed & Confused was Murdoc's first point of call, chosen purely on the basis that it was named after the Led Zeppelin song ... er ... 'Dazed and Confused'. It was editorial director Jefferson Hack's decision to commission the piece.

Jefferson Hack: Well I went down to the (Kong) studio, listened to the music, saw the promo for the first video that they'd done where Jamie had done the illustrations against a real kind of backdrop and liked the music and thought let's do it as a cover.

Murdoc: Correct answer.

The interview was held initially at Kong Studios, before Murdoc decided to cram the band, plus journo Roger Morton, into his Vauxhall Astra and conduct the rest of the piece at 90 mph on their way to the photo shoot. It was during this hi-speed burn-up that Murdoc went out of his way to slag off every other band of the day, from Oasis and Limp Bizkit, to Britney and Christina, taking a swipe at Radiohead and Billy Ocean along the way. He ended with the declaration that he'd 'seen plumbers' arses that are better looking than Five'.

Not particularly smart, nor original, but the point had been made. Gorillaz were a different band coming from a different place.

The pictures were to be taken at the Dazed & Confused offices in Old Street, East London.

The shoot didn't go without its ructions either ...

Russel: We asked Jamie Hewlett to come down to help out with the styling. But as you said earlier, he was known for being a bit of a troublemaker. I don't know what happened after we left, but Jefferson Hack wasn't that happy.

Jefferson Hack: Jamie asked me if I minded if Russel smeared burgers on the wall or if Murdoc threw a TV across the room. And, er ... I didn't really know what he was going on about so I didn't pay much attention. But when I came in the next morning there were burgers smeared on the wall and there was a television thrown across the room and I wasn't very happy about it.

However the impression that Gorillaz made on Morton seemed to have the desired, full-frontal effect.

After the usual tedious rigmarole of inter-band arguing, with Murdoc attempting to stick a lit cigarette into 2D's ear while he slept, the band played their album to the hack. First reactions looked good. Roger concluded that the album was:

'A seminal summation: an eclectic revelation: a sensi'n'bongo riffed simultaneous requiem and eulogy for pop. No, really. "Slow Country" floats it. "Tomorrow Comes Today" ouija-raggas out. "M1 A1" roadrunner flatfloors for the central reservation of retro-nihilism. Oh indeed. Dubbed, echoic, clangorous and zombie-rocking it draws a line from Crawley to Kingston via New York'n'Cuba and tightrope-walks the distance doing the punky reggae pogo.

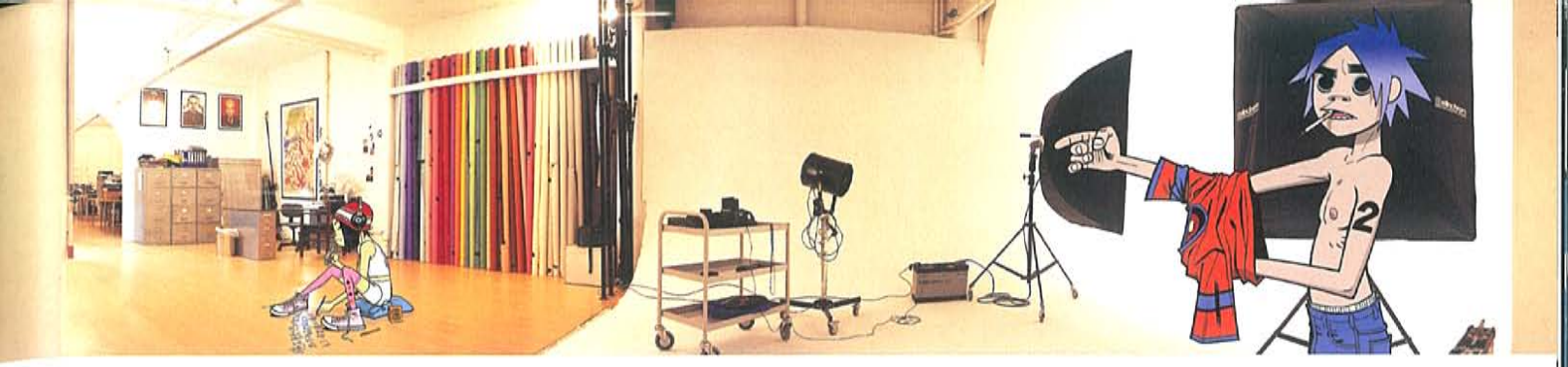
'Take a million four-piece combos, composed of a black-arts obsessed Svengali bassist, a downers addict voidoid singer, a hip hop hardman drummer and a Tamagotchi rockchick guitarist and 999, 999 times you'd get Skunk Anansie at the wrong speed. Gorillaz' debut is the one in a million exception.'

Murdoc, satisfied that Morton got the music, went on to boast that Gorillaz were 'the Bollocks of the Gods. Who else is there? Gorillaz are virtual crack for the stereo'.

He also went on to declare, for some reason, that he'd lost his virginity to a dinner lady when he was nine and that he'd been in a bad mood ever since.

Murdoc: I guess we set out our stall pretty directly in that first interview. We said everything we were about, and everything that we were against. We threw the gauntlet down.

Ultimately Roger Morton's assessment was that 'in a world where everything is a virtual copy of itself, where there's nothing but image, where publicists have publicists and where celebrity is bleakly industrial, it's inevitable that "image" starts to collapse in on itself'. He concluded with the sentiment that the music was inspired and a therefore great incentive to suspend disbelief.



Murdoc: I don't know what he was on about, but it doesn't matter. He liked the record, so job done...

2D: I think he liked the singing mostly.

Murdoc: In your dreams, sunshine.

The Dazed & Confused piece served as a comprehensive introduction to the helter skelter world of Gorillaz; their attitude, intention and ambition.

But mouth is one thing. Now let's see some nice big trousers.

It's time to back it up properly.

Clint Eastwood

'Go ahead punk ... film my day'

Having displayed the potential possibilities with their 'Tomorrow Comes Today' video, Gorillaz now prepared to step up to the premier league, upping their game entirely with the now seminal 'Clint Eastwood' video.

What they created over the next 16 weeks was nothing short of a masterpiece.

Despite the incident at the Dazed & Confused office, they re-hired their previous cohort Jamie Hewlett, and between them discussed the job in hand: 'How do we make the finest example of a Gorillaz video?'

Murdoc: That's not the type of thing we'd say at all actually.

Initially the band suggested the possibility of doing a straightforward performance piece. This sounded like a reasonably pedestrian idea, until Murdoc revealed he'd like to shoot it in the dead of night, at the notoriously haunted graveyard at Kong Studios.

The video shoot quickly escalated from a band promo into a game of chicken, with Murdoc Niccals upping the ante. With an evil glint in his eye, Murdoc challenged both the band and the film crew to spend an entire night in the graveyard without wetting themselves.

Murdoc: *'If ye stays 'til dawn, yea's can keep yir jobs. Film all ye can boys, it's gonna be a long night.'*

2D: Why are you talking in that cod pirate accent?

Murdoc (shrugging): I just thought it sounded a bit more scary.

The video was storyboarded in incredible detail by Jamie, from every camera move to the lighting and set design, allowing no room for error. This was then faithfully re-enacted by the band. The team at Passion Pictures added more CG scenery and effects. (CG stands for Computer Generated. Well, I never!) The 'Clint Eastwood' video would take over 5,000 pieces of artwork, and a crew of 25 people four months to complete.

Murdoc: Uh-oh. Look out. Here comes Andrew . . .

Andrew Ruhemann, Passion Pictures: Well, 'Clint Eastwood' was the breakthrough. 'Tomorrow Comes Today' was a tentative dipped toe in the water from everybody's point of view. It was like, let's not spend too much money, let's just test the market, and then 'Clint Eastwood' just blasted through it all. I got emails from my great hero Brad Bird who did 'The Incredibles' – saying 'Fantastic, that is just so encouraging to see pieces like that – everyone's saying 3D is now the king and 2D is dead, how fantastic to see 2D animation of this calibre and this style looking modern and fresh'. And knowing that we'd done everything we could do to make this band a success . . . because given the quality of the design, given the quality of the music it was only ours to screw up! I felt we'd risen to the challenge and as a combined team effort it was a fantastic one. So 'Clint Eastwood' has hugely fond memories for me.

Murdoc: OK. This was the point the where the rest of the world began grasping my whole vision. That video was INCREDIBLE!

2D: Even today that footage sends shivers down my spine. It changed everything.

Russel: *Ev-er-y-thing.*

The red-on-black spray painted logo of Gorillaz coupled with a line from 'Dawn of the Dead', signals the arrival of something ominous and foreboding.

'Every dead body that is not exterminated, gets up and kills. The people it kills, get up and kill.'

Already we know we're not in Kansas no more. Jamie also asked 2D to add a little vocal intro to give the video a spaghetti western vibe. Murdoc's deep throaty baritone laugh bursts through as Russel's drum kicks in hard. Oooh so, so manly.

Opening on a comparatively straight studio set, the four Gorillaz appear on a shifting floating stage, the floor out of camera shot, thus giving the appearance of the band moving in and out of each other. This quickly mutates, triggered by darkening clouds and the manifestation of the Ghost Rapper, into an eerie phantasmagoria of inky blues and raven blacks. We're now with the band in the cemetery of Kong Studios.

Throughout the course of the next three minutes our retinas are bombarded with a relentless barrage of Technicolor netherworld antics as we witness the emergence of zombified apes, earthquakes, thundercracks, ghostly spirits rapping and martial arts . . .

2D: It's quite subtle what we did there.

The band presence awakes the army of undead zombies buried in the graveyard. The earth cracks open as a thick hairy arm shoots upwards, grabbing Murdoc between the legs.

2D: Murdoc, do you remember that ape that burst out of the ground and grabbed your nuts?

Murdoc: Yeah, I do. Very well. That guy squeezed my plums so hard, I was singing falsetto for weeks.

The undead zombie primates bre –

VIRUS

Murdoc: Seriously. They swelled up like melons. Big purple melons.

The undead zombie primates break into a step-perfect rendition of the ghoulish dance from Michael Jackson's 'Thriller'.

One of the apes, an unnecessarily camp gorilla, tells me that the work 'she's' been doing over the years has always included that particular piece of choreography. In her slightly husky New York Jewish accent, Florence, the head of this troupe, explains further:

Florence: Everyone thinks it was meant to be a pastiche of the Michael Jackson 'Thriller' video, but my girls and I have been working this act for as long as I can remember. We were peddling the whole 'Undead Zombie Ape Shuffle' schtick way back in the fifties. It was that Michelle Jackson that ripped us off.

Whatever.

Noodle disposes of these ghostly graveyard assailants with a swift and cheerful kick to the face, sending the big chimp flying. The night's horrors all fade to dust with the arrival of the first shards of morning light.

Murdoc: I told you weird stuff happens in that cemetery. Great place to shoot a video though.

The epic 'Clint Eastwood' footage, more so than anything else since the band's inception, introduced the whole nation – no wait, *the whole world* – to the dark, glorious, vibrant charms of Gorillaz. Its impact was immediate, globe-rattling and truly seismic, doing more to promote Gorillaz than 10 years of touring ever would have done.

It also received another big shove up the ladder of success via a smart and well-placed garage remix by Ed Case and Sweetie Irie, planting Gorillaz slap bang onto the dancefloors of every club south of John O' Groats. Another rarity in the industry; a remix that actually was a genuine club hit due to the authenticity of its birth.

Murdoc: Gorillaz hadn't asked Sweetie or Ed to do the remix. The master tapes were hijacked from Kong by a scurrilous group of cutlass-wielding pirate knaves who dubbed themselves The Middlerow Crew.

Having procured the booty, they dragged their haul back to their own studio, remixed it and then released it without the knowledge of the Gorillaz gang themselves.

Murdoc, spotting a mutual kinship with this gang of ruthless rapscallions admired their bold initiative and sanctioned the mix in the press. Wise move. Especially considering that the remix was so incendiary it blew up in every club, further enhancing Gorillaz' bad-boy street-level image, reaching an audience that had remained untouchable purely from the original version. The mix was then included on the official 'Clint Eastwood' releases.

With Ed Case's two-step garage mix Gorillaz showed that they were far more in tune with the heartbeat of Britain than any antiquated nostalgia of village greens, cups of milky tea and stripy boating jackets.

March 5th 2001 *'Clint Eastwood' single released*

March 11th 2001 *'Clint Eastwood' enters charts peaking at Number 3*

This milestone of pop culture stayed in the charts for fourteen weeks, and both the video and the single went on to win numerous awards in the UK, Europe and the USA.

Russel: This was a really big record, by anybody's standards. We sold something like 750,000 copies in Britain alone. The success of this in Britain just opened up everything for us internationally.

With this release Gorillaz managed to do what no band has done since the birth of teen culture back in the 1950s; to be all-inclusive and all-enchanting, pulling in kids, teenagers, hip-dudes and old hands alike.

Closing any generation gap, music fans dug its cool, dub-boy slouch; the lazy lullaby vocal crossed with the gouchey, daisy age rap, while others were thrilled by the sharp, fast-paced and quickfire animation. The combination showed an adventurous outlook, and a loose, genuine passion for old school styles.

It wasn't taking an outsider's view. It was outside purely by its originality, and invited everybody in through its confidence, swagger and warm-hearted approach.

The current pop climate had been trapped joylessly between the facile and patronising Prozac-grin of manufactured bands, and the counterfeit soul of enigmatic young craftsmen; all apparently future legends in the making, yet whose artistic authenticity could only be expressed by an inability to crack a smile.

Murdoc: I don't care about your pain. Entertain me. Or go home.

For a music industry grown stagnant, this was an icy-fresh breath of life.

Gorillaz trounced all competition. What's more, nations across the world also thought so. 'Clint Eastwood' did what no British single had done for years.

It made a proper dent in the US charts.

Night of the Living Dead: The London Scala

Murdoc: We knew we'd cracked it with the 'Clint Eastwood' video, man, but a true band? They're only as good as their live show. We knew we had to get out there and prove it. The Camden Brownhouse gig was one thing, but we needed to flex our muscles and earn our 'rrrrrocking' stripes in front of a living, breathing audience.

Therefore in late February 2001, a month of rehearsals were booked at the Depot Studios in London's Holloway Road area, to give the band a break from Kong, dust off their stage personas and also to allow an exclusively invited audience to witness the show prior to the first gig. 'Just so we didn't cock it up in front of the big important critics'.

February 27th 2001 *First rehearsal at The Depot*

An intricate stage show was devised in which exclusively designed visuals and graphics were to be projected onto stark white sheets, behind which the four Gorillaz would play. The intention would be to see the band in dramatic silhouette, casting sinister illusory shapes.

Murdoc: *Oooohhh . . . ghosties!*

Noodle: Everyone was so curious as to what the public image would be, we thought we would mimic Public Image Ltd.'s early eighties New York performances, and have projections shown on screen, while we cast shadows and silhouettes behind it.

The full-colour animations would still be seen with the silhouettes working in and out of them.

BELOW

The Depot rehearsal studios, London

'Some tramp strolled in and dropped his trousers. We have a closed set for rehearsals now.'

MURDOC NICCALS

PINK RABBIT SAYS
SCALA

Murdoc took full advantage of the London rehearsals, taking time out with 2D in the evening to hijack various guestlists round the capital, including a Missy Elliot bash in Brixton, plus Destiny Child's album launch party at the Dorchester.

Murdoc intended to capitalize on his newfound fame.

Murdoc: I'd spent 35 years practising my autograph, and I'd got it nice and flamboyant. Real curly, see? So now that people were starting to recognise me I thought 'OK, love. I'll just grab my big magic marker'.

Murdoc then unleashes a laugh so filthy it'd take a team of industrial strength washerwomen to clean it up.

2D: Everywhere we went doors were opening. It's funny like that. People used to close them when they saw me coming.

March 22nd 2001 *Gorillaz perform at London's Kings Cross Scala*

'Clint Eastwood' was riding high in the charts and there was a general feeling of good will towards the band, although peppered with a cautious suspicion that the whole thing still might be a giant media prank, played out by a bunch of Hoxton tosspots, which if taken at face value would leave the onlooker with egg on their face.

Moreover, having gleaned a number of plaudits for the single and video, it laid them wide open for criticism in other areas.

Murdoc: Yeah, well you can stick all that stuff where the sun don't shine. Accusing us of being a gimmick is a bit like accusing Jesus Christ of having 'a bit of a messiah complex'. True, maybe, but when faced with the undeniable genius of what we put out, does that really still matter?

The concert played host to a number of high profile attendees, among them supermodel Helena Christensen, Sadie n' Jude, the 'Ant-or-Dec', the Clash's Paul Simonon and TV's favourite floppy haired gobsmith 'Jonathan Ross'.

Murdoc: Loads of celebrities came down, just to try and get a peek of the young gods in action. But we were behind a screen, see? So you can kiss my shadowy arse, 'Mr Jonathan Ross'.

Russel: Actually Mr Ross has always been supportive with Gorillaz from day one, so it was good to see him there.

Murdoc pauses to flinch then adds:

Murdoc: I tell you what though, I dig P.I.L. but I did just want to smash my way out of that screen, and shove my thick hairy bass right in the face of that bleedin' audience. That'd shut them right up.

As the house lights went down, Murdoc quickly necked a couple of black bombers. The band ripped into opener 'M1 A1' and proceeded to tear through a 150-decibel rendition of their debut album. It was like The Who's 'Live at Leeds' played in a rub-a-dub fashion by a deeply stoned Devo with Brian Eno getting all mental ambient on the out-front desk.

Murdoc: Really? . . . Can I get a recording of that?

The reception at the venue was riotous, but backstage the band were more philosophical. It showed them that in order to fully realise the Gorillaz skills, to take them out of the arthouse and onto the main stage, many great achievements lay ahead of them.

Murdoc: Actually that's also crap. Personally I thought we played a stormer that night. I celebrated by staying awake for a whole week and telling everyone I came across how brilliant Gorillaz were.

2D: There was a picture of me in one magazine the next day that said '2D: "Gibbon" it large'. What the hell's that supposed to mean?

Murdoc: Oh . . . Oh actually that's quite good. Gorillaz: 'Gibbon' it large. I can see what they've done there.

2D: I don't get it.

The evening ended with Sweetie Irie and the Middle Row crew performing their hit UK garage mix of 'Clint Eastwood' live, beneath a downpour of £20 notes, which they chucked in wads at the crowd.

All in all, not bad for a first gig. The papers the next day were less magnanimous.

While the NME surmised that 'their best work is a triumphant denial of the superstar ego', The Times accused the gig of having 'a cold and emotionally stunted quality', and noted the vocals were sung in 'a curiously spastic falsetto'.

The Guardian suggested that Gorillaz were one bit of monkey business Damon would be best off chalking up to experience.

One chubby, man-breasted, clown-haired gonk, writing for The Independent on Sunday, made a particularly embittered attack against Damon Albarn, calling Gorillaz a 'failed scam' and suggesting that 'one day in 2003, Albarn will awake and involuntarily double up into a foetal position with shame at the memory'.

Which for a first full gig performed by associates is perhaps a little strong.

Murdoc: Funnily enough, since then that flatulent goth has ballooned in size, while his gossip column has been shrinking. Maybe he's actually eating his own words.

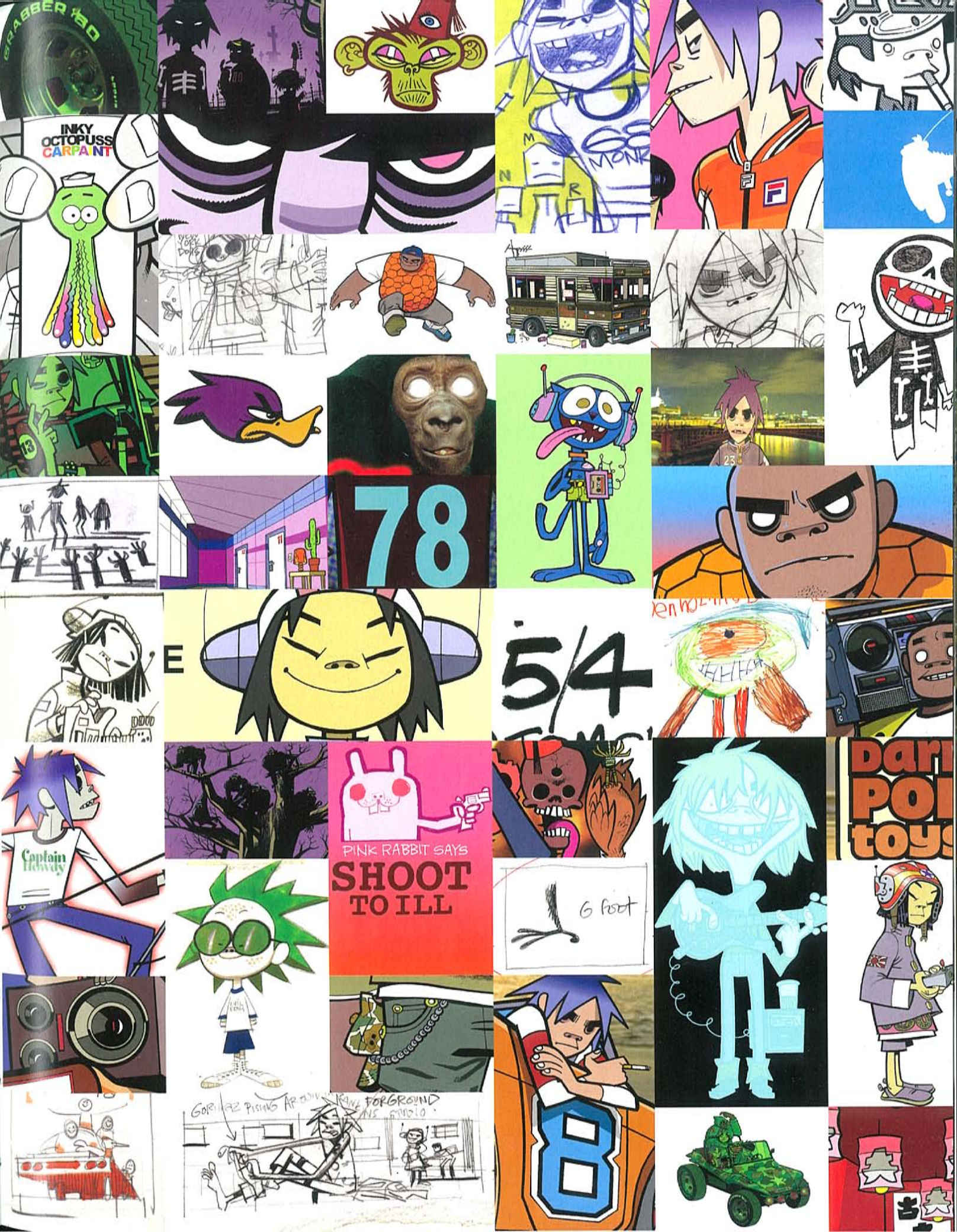
March 26th 2001 *Gorillaz debut album released*

Four days into Murdoc's post-gig bender was a day of mixed emotions for the reasonably young man from Stoke. The Gorillaz album was released nationwide but on the bad side Murdoc's beloved Winnebago, his mobile knocking shop, was stolen from the carpark of Kong Studios.

Murdoc: So, some bright record company spark – as a marketing ploy – gave a free key away with the album. The key gave the recipient entrance to my Winnebago. MY sodding Winnebago. Predictably, the thing was gone within half an hour. Vanished. And you know what? I reckon it was that freak Dr Wurzel who took it.

OK. Who's Dr Wurzel?

BELOW
The only known picture of Dr Wurzel, Gorillaz' antagonist
'Thief' MURDOC NICCALS


INKY
OCTOPUSS
CARPANT
78
5/4
PINK RABBIT SAYS
SHOOT
TO ILL
6 foot
Captain
Hallway
toys

LEFT
Murdoc's stolen Winnebago

Murdoc: A pain in the arse. A dead man. He's given Gorillaz nothing but crap since we started. I don't really know much about him other than he's a doctor and he's a Wurzel. He's got an army of geeks online that all look up to him. When he nicked my Winnebago, all the little nerds posted up pictures of him driving it in different places. On top of Big Ben, on the Death Star, in a lake in Kent, baked in a sodding cake . . . GOD. It's so irritating. MY Winnebago!

The 'Find Murdoc's Winnebago' craze swept through Gorillaz' online fanbase like virus, with fresh and increasingly more bizarre sightings being added to Gorillaz website daily. Dr Wurzel is also rumoured to have then bootlegged Gorillaz' first recording 'Ghost Train', leaking an image on to the Internet of the first line-up of Gorillaz with original guitarist Paula Cracker. He found both of these in the stolen Winnebago.

Murdoc: None of this would have happened if the record label hadn't given away the keys with the album. I mean, damn! Seriously, how thick is that? Giving away a set of car keys. Try pulling that kind of crap with Elton John, mate. See how far you get.

Murdoc pauses, still fuming about the loss of his mobile home.

Murdoc: Actually that really pissed me right off, bigtime. I'd just bought a massive baggie of Proplus from Boots, and I was planning to use the old Winnebago to tour the length and breadth of England, starting at 6 am, to visit every single 'Chart Return' shop possible. This would ensure a top-end chart status for the band. Once the old mobile home was nicked, well . . . I had to take a cab.

Murdoc Niccals managed to purchase at least 17,500 copies of his own album before he ran out of IOU slips. Still it did the job.

April 1st 2001 *Gorillaz album enters the UK charts*

The Gorillaz debut album went to Number 3 in the UK Charts, making Gorillaz proper stars now. Album Charts!? That's the type of thing that big proper bands like Guns n' Roses and Sabbath did. Now Gorillaz mixed in their ranks.

Russel: From here on in we end up doing less music and more interviews. Still we'd asked for this so . . . who can complain? That's how we roll now.

Murdoc: No mate. You're practically round. That's how *you* roll now.

Chapter 4
Gorillaz on the March

'It's the music that we choose
It's the music that we choose
It's the music that we choose
It's the music that we choose'

With the album riding high in the charts off the back of the 'Clint Eastwood' sensation, the British press began to treat Gorillaz a little less like a flash-in-the-pan gimmick. Or if they did it was a gimmick that maybe demanded a closer investigation.

The UK press interest sparked a chain of excitement and analysis that still runs today.

Murdoc: Oi! Russel. What's the biggest meal you've ever eaten?

Russel: Uh . . . um . . . uh . . .

The overall impression was that the Gorillaz album, while perhaps a little contrived, was of an exceptional quality. Whilst admiring the extensive array of influences, it was generally also conceded that the unique way that Gorillaz presented themselves allowed people to collaborate in an original and experimental way.

The Times gave it four out of five stars: 'Scratchy beats, hypnotic lo-fi dub and hip hop sounds create an album that is as inventive as it is fun. Executed with wit, flair and imagination.'

The Sunday Telegraph commented, ' 'Zombie hip hop' they call it, which captures quite well their loose, catchy, streetwise mix of rap, ska, pop and dub – how Massive Attack might sound if you injected them with vast quantities of happy-making drugs'.

The Guardian noted that Gorillaz were 'steeped in old US electro, UK punk, world music and Sly & Robbie.' The paper also went on to say, 'Gorillaz are difficult to love, but impossible not to like.'

Amongst other things Gorillaz were hailed as 'A Specials for the new millennium'. Music Week awarded it the coveted Album of the Week spot and the magazine MOJO gave it a great review, ending on the line 'Electric, upbeat, and actually very good'.

Murdoc: 'Actually'? What do you mean 'actually'? These qualifying words the whole time; just tedious. Drop your inhibitions, kids, come bathe in the sunshine of my love. There's nothing to fear.

There were also loads of other reviews with words like 'splendid' or 'irresistible'. I saw one which went 'alarmingly addictive'.

Murdoc: Really? I used the words 'genius', 'gobsmacking' and 'supreme overload of all I survey' almost on a daily basis back then.

Despite the praise, many reviewers still hedged their bets with the observation that the 'concept' of Gorillaz had the ability to irk, while conceding that the music on offer was of a high enough standard to override that.

The fact was the two sides were irrefutably linked. It was the unique way that Gorillaz presented themselves that allowed the collaborators to be less self-conscious and far more creative, producing the results achieved.

Murdoc: Christ! 'Cynical'; 'Marketing ploy'. This is just a huge load of crapola. All bands are marketed, dreamed up, conceived . . . otherwise it just comes across as a shoddy mess. You just have to check the quality of the manufacturer, though. Seriously. We never put out anything that we didn't think was 100% as good as it could be.

Russel: So much of this is born out of the love we had for bands that we looked up to when we were kids; bands that looked and sounded great, that we put up on our walls . . . artists that didn't let you down. It was important to us to pass that feeling on and feel we'd given the next generation something that was vital and valuable to them, something exciting. Gorillaz was an expression of love.

2D: This is freaking me out a little, actually. Was I born a gimmick, or did I become one?

Many of the reviews for the Gorillaz' debut wrote about the album in the context of the careers of the collaborators, sometimes overlooking the talents and input of the band themselves.

Russel: Damon Albarn's endorsement obviously opened a whole load of doors for us. Although when put in relation with his other work, I guess it could've looked like his association with us was taken as an opportunity for him to escape his more public persona.

Murdoc: It wasn't. He was an associate and never a member. None of the guests were. Anyhow, it was actually a blatant opportunity to create *my* more public persona. There's only four members of Gorillaz. Er . . . That's me, Russel, Noodle and er . . . whatshisface. And to be honest I've got my doubts about some of them.

Murdoc takes a slurp of some concoction he's holding.

Murdoc: I tell you another thing. Around this time I was watching one of those 'I remember what happened 20 minutes ago' programmes where they drag out endless fools to recount some turgid piece of nostalgia. I remember thinking, 'People should be kissing our arses for doing what we're doing'. How are they gonna make any new nostalgia shows, if all they're doing now is making programmes with people commenting on re-runs of old programmes? This country was stuck down a well till we came along.

At one stage the press got so hectic both Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett in their respective roles as the album's associate producer and video director undertook some of the Gorillaz press themselves . . .

Murdoc: Goal-hangers. Every time I flicked on the TV, those two were on it. I had to throw it out the window eventually.

While the press and media may have played their cards close to their chest, Gorillaz fans has no such reservations. The album flew off the shelves and brought greater success to each and every one of its contributors and collaborators than any of them had experienced individually before.

Russel: The kids get it. I think the kids really get it. And that's what's important to me, to us. I think the world we've created, the steps we've made to change things are as important as any other musical movement. It's just that this movement consists of a single band. But what we've inspired is just as vast.

23
96
Foot

2D: Most bands create an image to make themselves look like something cool. Gorillaz is something quite cool that's made to look like an image. I think that's why we worked.

Russel: We had to do so many interviews around this time. I kinda wish we could have just got someone to write them while we concentrated on the music. But it wouldn't have been right, so we did them ourselves . . .

Weird thoughts aside, it was time to go and play abroad. Murdoc quickly purchased four tickets for the Eurostar, packed a couple of sandwiches and a thermos flask of hot coffee and Gorillaz headed 'à travers la Manche' to France. *Ooh La La!*

Paris and Dublin Shows

June 22nd 2001 *La Cigale, Paris, France*

With the album out, and reviews flooding in, Gorillaz booked some more live dates abroad, their first since the Scala concert back in March.

Russel: By the time I got to Paris I was so hungry I could eat a horse.

Murdoc: Luckily we were rolling into France, where horsemeat is pretty easy to get hold of, Russ. *Bonjour Paris!*

The world's first virtual band pulled off something of a coup that night, playing to 1500 people at the intimate and ornate La Cigale in Paris's red light district Pigalle, while simultaneously taking the show to the gathered masses of the world wide web, headlining the first ever virtual Glastonbury Festival. The real thing was cancelled that year after the organisers were prosecuted by the local council for breaking the terms of their licence. The festival's migration to the internet was disappointing news for hemp-smoking hippies and loo-roll sellers everywhere, but ideal for Gorillaz, whose headline performance on the Friday night drew hundreds of thousands of viewers around the world.

Russel: It's funny how different territories react to Gorillaz. In England they loved the record but were unsure about the live show. In America, they loved they record, and immediately understood the way we present our personalities. In France they loved the live show.

Murdoc: They love me everywhere, Russel. Everywhere.

June 24th 2001 *Dublin Olympia, Ireland*

Murdoc: I don't remember playing this gig at all.

BELOW
Paris, La Cigale
'An actual shot of a virtual gig. I took this with my mobile phone, on night-time setting'
MURDOC NICCALS

'Gorillaz' released in America

With a clutch of US contributors on the record it was always expected there was going to be a certain amount of interest Stateside in Gorillaz, but no one could have predicted just how fiercely the States would react.

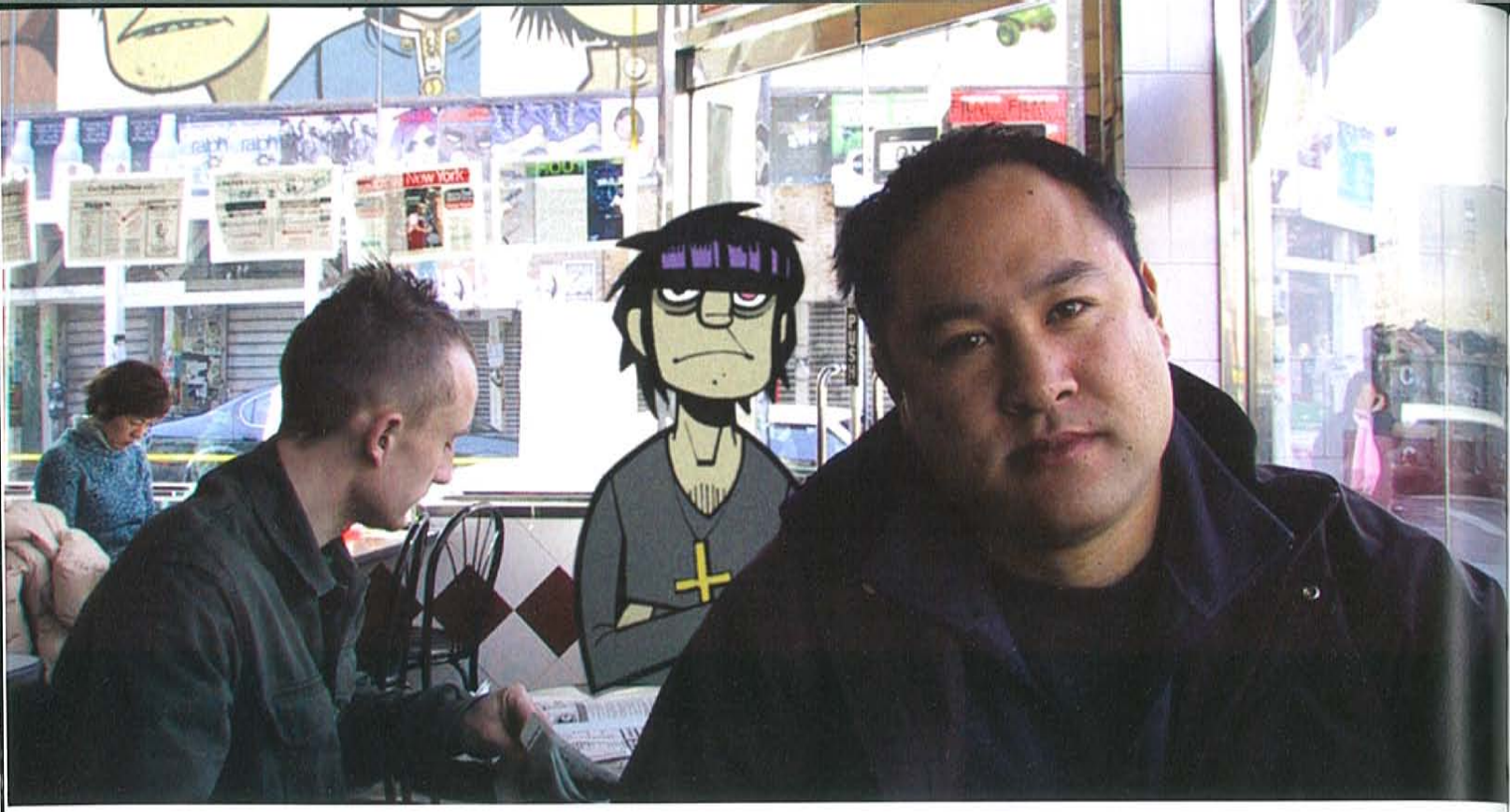
Russel: A long time before the record was released back in America we went over to have a meeting with the label, just to try and explain how we wanted to run this project. Because the way we go about things isn't immediately obvious to most people.

Murdoc: Really? What's so hard to grasp?

It was originally thought by the band's US label Virgin that this new British act 'Gorillaz' would maybe shift 25,000 copies of their album, at a push.

Russel: We went over there and explained face to face what we felt. Murdoc was quite direct, I remember. Shouting and kicking chairs, pushing people in the face. Because of the vehemence of Murdoc's speech, the projected sales of the album went from 25,000 to 50,000 and then just before we released the record, the number they decided to ship out to shops went to 75,000.

Murdoc (sarcastically): The vision they had was . . . just so inspiring. It was like working with prophets. Ooh, 75,000. Really? BIG DEAL!! Every time I prodded them it went up by 25,000. But it still wasn't enough.



Russel: I don't think people ever really guessed that it was going to be as successful as it was. The week before the record came out in America I remember ringing the guy in America going, 'Are you sure that you've got enough albums?' and I remember him saying to me, 'Yeah. It's all good, Mr Hobbs. We're completely covered'. And then what happened was the first week the album was released they ran out of Gorillaz stock.

Murdoc (rolling his eyes): Duh! I flew over from England, went over to the States, found the guy in his empty storeroom and just held a sign up in front of him saying 'I told you so'.

Russel: But I think we sold maybe 150,000 or 200,000 copies in the first week, just in America. So the label was like, 'This is going to go off!'

Murdoc: Sound of apple landing on head, as whole record company rediscover gravity. 'Eureka' heard as water falls out of bath, wheels roll down hill. Headline reads 'Bleedin' obvious discovered right in front of own face'. Seriously, it's like teaching children not to put their fingers in electrical sockets. 'I TOLD YOU LOADS OF TIMES!!!'

2D: So that was quite good.

June 19th 2001 *'Gorillaz' released in the US*

In scenes reminiscent of The Beatles, families camped out all night outside record shops in New York. Kids had to be hosed off the shelves. Anti-riot police were called to Wal-Mart, and fights broke out in Super Denny's Crappy Little Record Squat. It was like a bush fire, and Gorillaz were squirting lighter fuel right into the centre.

Sergeant Jim Ignatowski, police officer of the NYPD: We had to treat loads of kids for heat exhaustion. We found thousands of kids passed out in the street. They'd dressed up in Gorilla outfits while queuing up for autographs, and obviously just overheated.

One child apparently burst into flames just looking at the record cover. The reviews that accompanied the record were equally er ... animated.

Rolling Stone, Sept 27th 2001, described the debut as 'a mélange of hip hop, electronica, rock and dub served up as gleefully catchy pop songs ... one of the oddest albums to appear on the Billboard charts this summer', calling Gorillaz 'A prefab cartoon anti-boy-band ... genre squishing art-pop'.

Spin, who later named the record as one the albums of the year, announced Gorillaz were, 'Smarter than the Archies, phatter than the Banana Splits, the best cartoon pop act since, well, D12.' They went on to make Gorillaz Best New Band of the Year, saying Gorillaz were 'a technicolour collage of backpacker hip hop, Britpop balladry and Jamaican dub.'

The Blank Page threw in this: 'Like a musical grenade that's gone off in a lunch box.'

Wired magazine enthused, 'Seldom does an album come along that I find as innovative and interesting as the Gorillaz debut.'

Murdoc agreed wholeheartedly.

Murdoc: Seldom does an album come along that I find as innovative and interesting as the Gorillaz debut.

Only the Village Voice seemed to miss the point, commenting in their July 10th 2001 edition: 'Within a year the whole project might end up a mere blip of London nostalgia ... and thus they'll be right on par with not only what they were worth in the first place, but with so many bands these days, including the girl and boy groups they aim to sabotage.'

Murdoc: Oh, so Dr Wurzel's stolen someone's typewriter now. 'On par with not only what they were worth in the first place?' What's that meant to mean?

Other than with the Village Voice though, the Gorillaz band did seem to be making big waves across the pond.

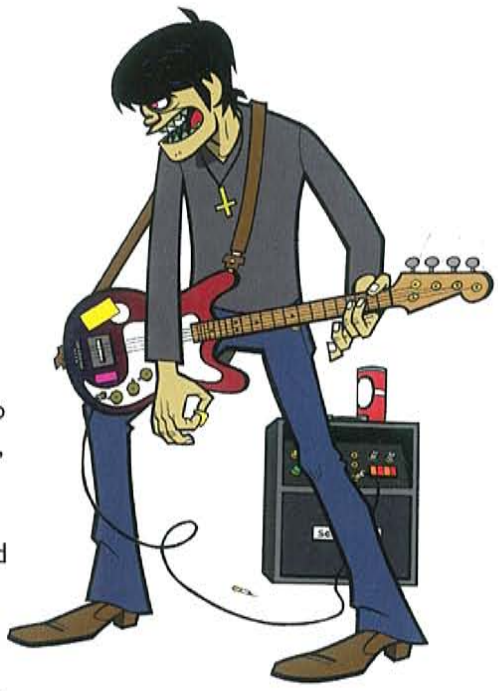
Russel: I think they just understood the whole way we wanted to go. It took off in America very quickly. I mean it REALLY took off. The phones were ringing off the hook for all things Gorillaz. They wanted as much as we could give them.

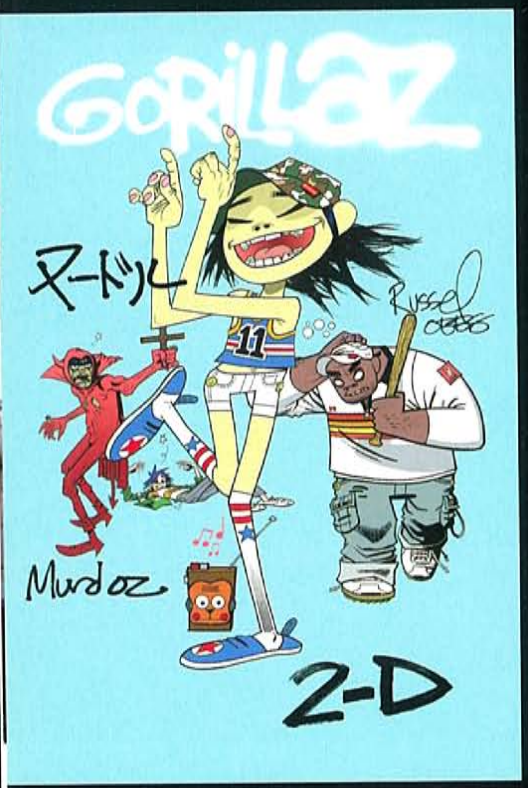
Murdoc: The word you're looking for, Russel, is 'exploded'.

Offers of remix work began to flood in for Gorillaz with everyone from Redman to Bronski Beat seeking out the Gorillaz Golden Touch. Furthermore the cutting-edge, groundbreaking novelty act Gorillaz were asked to advertise or put their name to every product under the sun from soft drinks, wristwatches, tanks and snowshoes to egg timers, Harry Hill, bazookas and diving cleats. Nothing seemed to be deemed too outlandish or inappropriate for this unusual and fascinating group. Almost universally, though, these offers were rejected, some quite forcefully ...

Murdoc: I smashed a lamb shank right into the face of one of Bronksi Beat once. But it was nothing musical. It was just the sound of their screeching voices. I was trying to read and they were next to me arguing the toss over which useless song to cover next, or some shit. So I just picked up this shoulder of meat and ....Whack! Knocked 'em out.

BELOW
'I'm just polishing my bass here'
MURDOC NICCALS





ABOVE
'That's rare, to have all of our autographs on one poster. I've never seen one' 2D

As Gorillaz' profile continued to rise, every celeb, from the 'A' list to the 'Zzzz' list, wanted in on the Gorillaz action.

2D: People went literally bananas for Gorillaz.

Big Fat Russel: There were like 30ft poster banners of our faces put up in Times Square, in New York. That's when you kind of realise that maybe this ain't a local thing anymore. We had to speak to three . . . four thousand radio stations in the first week. Just the phone was red hot.

Murdoc: Radio's wacky in America. I don't reckon the idea of talking down the phone to a cartoon was particularly unusual for them. They loved all that kind of stuff. I could just phone them up, start cracking jokes live on air, and have the whole station in stitches. Sometimes they were laughing so hard they had to shut the show down.

Russel: We did most of our radio stuff in America. We did some in the UK but in America they really wanted to talk to us. Worldwide the reaction changed from place to place. In Germany they didn't get Gorillaz as a band at all, but really loved the music, and the videos . . . but in America, boy!! They got it all.

Murdoc: My hand swelled up like a bouncy castle, just from signing autographs.

Stateside, Gorillaz were seen as a brand new form of entertainment in their own right, without being received relative to their admittedly awesome collaborators. The band seemed like a superhuman musical force that exploded out of nowhere.

The collective jaw of The United States of America would have hit the floor like a ten tonne weight, if it wasn't wired shut.

June 25th 2001 *'Gorillaz' album enters US chart, peaking at No. 14*

All of this was surprising, but what was really truly amazing was that Gorillaz had achieved all of this without performing a single live show in the US. This dispelled all myths that a band can only break the States with years upon years of pointless extensive slog, playing every backwater and toilet venue that America can supply.

Gorillaz had skipped all of that. The debut album went on to sell in excess of six million copies worldwide.

Murdoc: Mmmm six . . . millllllliioonnn. Sounds quite good, doesn't it?

It seemed that Murdoc was making good on his long-staked claim to international superstardom. His newly-acquired sharkskin day-planner was full of invitations to play golf with Alice Cooper and Iggy Pop. At the same time. But the 19th hole would have to wait: Gorillaz had another single coming out. Oi! Mr Hewlett, sharpen your propelling pencil: there are storyboards to draw.

ROOKIES
SPRAY PAINT
OLYMPIC SMOKER

19-2000

'As far back as I can remember, I've always wanted to be in Wacky Races'
2D

With 'Clint Eastwood' and Gorillaz' album riding high in the charts on both sides of the pond, the band planned another new release. The '19-2000' video saw Gorillaz migrating from their native Kong Studios and hitting the highway to film a road trip to end them all.

2D: Wacky Races is the cartoon where all the cars and teams are racing each other round the world, to win the title of 'World's Wackiest Racer'. I liked Professor Pat Pending's motor that could change into any kind of car you wanted. I told Jamie and he was really into the idea of doing sumthing like that for the new video. So that's where the idea came from. Uh . . . Wacky Races.

D'you think the name Professor Pat Pending was a play on the phrase 'Patent Pending'?

2D: Yeah. (Nods fiercely in agreement) Yeah . . . it probably is.

It's too easy.

Jamie had already commenced storyboarding on the proposed next single, which was originally planned to be the track '5/4', a far more caustic and spikier release. Unfortunately a last minute decision was taken to switch the single to '19-2000', leaving Hewlett with a minimal amount of time to rethink.

Jamie Hewlett: Because of the switch in single I think we were already a month into the time we had to make the '19-2000' video, so I had to come up with a new idea on the spot. The reason for the Wacky Races-cum-road trip theme was that if you draw a comic strip, which was the only thing I could compare it to at the time because I'd only made two videos, it's really easy and quick to get a nice flow running with driving sequences. It's all lots of shots of '*shoooooom!!*' (*mimes scenery rushing past*), and I really like that sort of style. So that's why we did Gorillaz in their buggy, driving round this nondescript landscape . . .

The vehicle of choice for this extravaganza was their very own Geep; hand-built and designed by drummer Russel Hobbs. The hi-powered car came complete with power steering, twin airbags and a loaded armoury of concealed weapons. With Murdoc at the wheel, the four Gorillaz sped off on their action-packed adventure.

2D: Murdoc immediately started taking liberties with the Highway Code, and started driving the Geep on two wheels pulling stupid stunts and stuff.

Murdoc: We're making a video, dunce. I gotta pull crap like that otherwise it's just gonna look *b.o.r.i.n.g.*

Murdoc, with his evil chuckling and devilish plans, becomes Dick Dastardly, his sidekick Muttley and the whole of The Anthill Mob rolled into one inconsiderate road user.

2D: I'm surprised no one slapped you with a giant A.S.B.O.

In keeping with the understated, 'eggshell-stepping' approach of 'Clint Eastwood', Gorillaz are confronted by aliens, collapsed motorways and, of course, a roadblock in the form of a 300ft moose.

2D: Where were we going?

Murdoc: I've no idea. The director just shouted, 'drive' so I did.

The fab four zoom along the planet-sized Scalextric track pulling foolish tricks and maverick moves until they hit the sky-scraping 'loop-de-loop'. For some of the later stunts in the video, CG doubles were used; to have endangered any of the real members of Gorillaz would have been an insane risk.

2D: Er . . . no one told me that. I just sat in the buggy all day. I gotta admit when we leaped across that gap I was pretty frightened. My seatbelt was all twisted too.

This was the first time that CG models had been used to replace the real Gorillaz in any of their videos. However, for the loop-de-loop, Gorillaz wanted to perform the stunts themselves.

Murdoc: We can't have people thinking Gorillaz are chickens.

2D: That'd be 'Chickenz' actually . . .

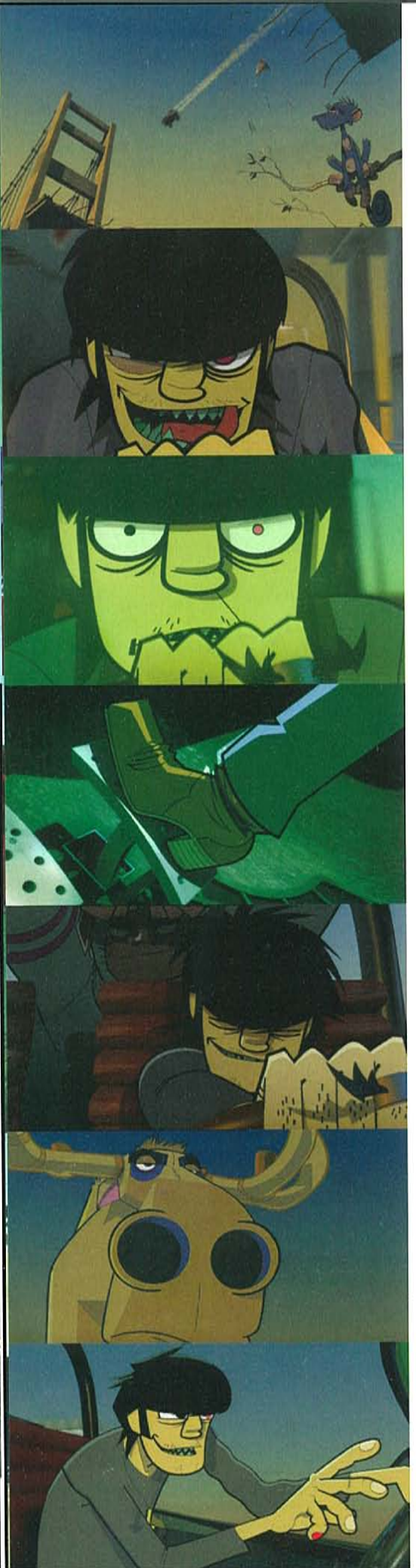
The whole loop stretched to over half a mile above the road, and demanded that a 180 mile-an-hour speed was maintained to keep the G-force levels sufficiently high.

Noodle: It was quite difficult to do the lip-synching to the music when I was upside down, 1,000ft up, at that speed. We had to do several takes to make it look right.

Having successfully negotiated the 360° hi-flying rollover, Gorillaz once again hit the tarmac-y trail. Ignoring the warning signs, Gorillaz leap across a 200ft cavernous drop created by the absent bridge. Then, with a right-handed detour, they pass up the opportunity of a 'Christian makeover', offered by The Church of Salvation, that looms up ahead.

Predictably enough, Gorillaz immediately come under fire from an alien spacecraft.

Was that real or a stage prop?



2D: I don't know anymore . . .

Swerving the craft's laser beam, the band zig-zag in and out of the enemy's sights. The petrol station they pass is hit by the ray, exploding dramatically and leaving the dopey gas attendant with just a seared hat and a burnt-out business. So right, they've gone through all this kind of unbelievable nonsense, and then what happens?

Murdoc: When that 300ft moose rose out of the horizon I thought I was going mad. I mean, where the hell did that thing come from? I've never seen anything like it.

Russel: It was pretty big. The average height for a moose up to the shoulders generally ranges between six and a half to seven feet. I think the one that we used came in at about 290 to 300ft, up to the shoulders. That's considerably bigger.

The moose was hired by Jamie from an animal actors agency, and was used as a metaphor for creative intrusion. Obviously. Furthermore, to gain an authentic on-screen reaction, he neglected to tell the band.

Speak up. Where did the moose idea come from?

Russel: It wasn't a moose. It was an elk. A giant elk.

Easy mistake to make.

Murdoc: It was Jamie's idea. He didn't tell us he was gonna throw an elk into the mix, but apparently he based it on an old acquaintance of ours, whose name was Elk. I don't know what he's on about at all . . .

2D: He lost me at hello.

Through muffled incoherent speech I manage to ascertain that the giant moose represents a relentless, immovable stumbling block that stands between a creative traveller and the Valhalla of artistic potential. I know, sounds nuts, but I didn't come up with the idea, so don't shoot the messenger.

Jamie Hewlett: The elk basically gets in the way of creativity . . . just as they're getting off the freeway, just as they've got past the church, the Christian Church, they take the wrong detour . . . They get past the aliens that try to blow them up, they're sailing along, it's all going good and they survive all that stuff and then they're confronted by this dirty great big elk which is blocking the road!

It's non-stop round this way, isn't it?

Jamie Hewlett: So that was our little secret that we put in the video, about how their mate was always knocking on the door and stifling their creativity . . . Offering his endless distractions . . .

With the hairy roadblock rising, action needed to be taken fast.

2D: It looked really bored too . . .

Murdoc: Well, we soon put a stop to that, eh?

Murdoc attempts to clear the elk, yak, moose thing, out of their way with the skilful use of two Exocet missiles that the Geep just happened to be armed with.

Murdoc: I never leave anywhere without being tooled up. I'd be a fool to when you look at what goes on around us.

The heat-seeking devices fire out of the Geep, making a beeline for the head of the animal. Disaster strikes when the plan backfires. The mammoth beast sneezes, deflecting both bombs and sending them straight back at Gorillaz. The Geep and its cartoon contents are blown apart by their own weapons, with the buggy being left simply a smouldering wreck . . .

Murdoc: If the Bee Gees had had to put up with any of the garbage we endure to make videos, they would have quit showbusiness years ago.

Amidst a hail of burning tyres and flaming shrapnel, the Gorillaz Geep comes skidding to a halt.

Finally the horrific Gorillaz Gumball Rally is over! What's more they managed to complete the circuit in a record time of 3 minutes 17 seconds, smashing their personal best.

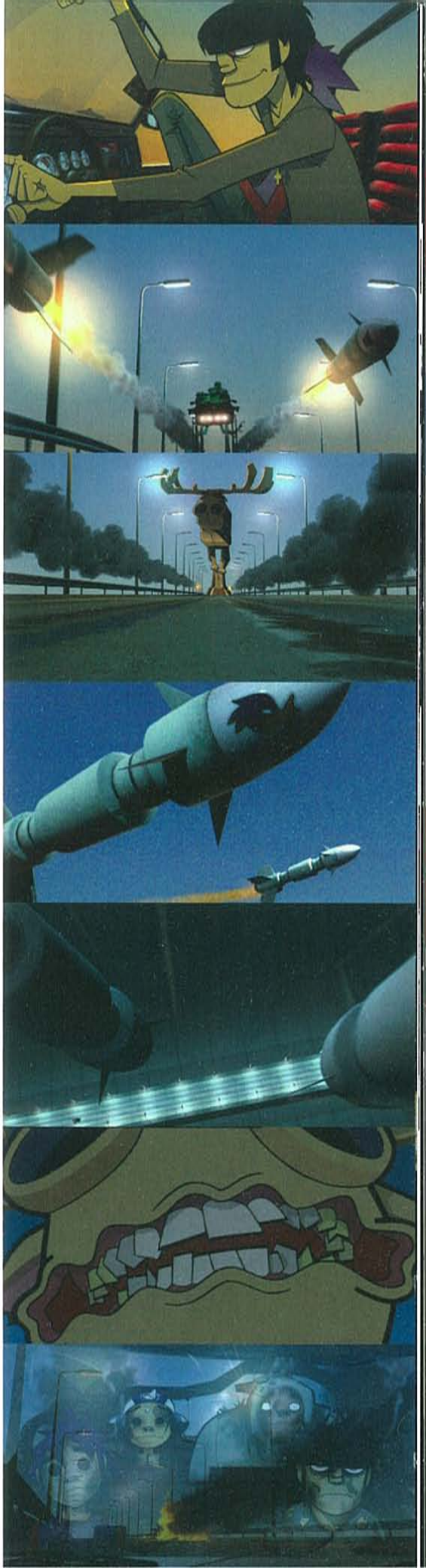
The cinematic results they captured were worth the sacrifice as the full-colour epic was another near-perfect Gorillaz promo. The day's eyebrow-raising events weren't completely over, though, as a certain 'friend' of Gorillaz made a lightning re-appearance.

Murdoc: So check this out, right. We're doing a little 'on set' ident piece for some TV station, and guess what? That midget sod Dr Wurzel drives past in *my* Winnebago! He beeps the horn and chucks a beer can at me, which hit me in the head!

Murdoc stares at me with a look of total disbelief.

Murdoc: When I catch up with him . . . I'm going to pummel him until he starts coughing up onions. Seriously. I'm doing an interview and he chucks a beer can at me? From out of my stolen wagon!?! Really. He's a dead man. I'm going to kick his lungs right off.

2D: I thought I looked wicked in that clip. I was rocking a Hunter S. Thompson in 'Fear and Loathing' type getup, with the hat and the pink shades. Triple gonzo apparel!



ABOVE
Gorillaz ident, filmed on the set of the '19-2000' video
'If you look you can see Wurzel zooming past, chucking a can at me and digging his own grave'
MURDOC NICCALS

June 25th 2001 *19-2000 single released*

June 29th 2001 *19-2000 enters the UK charts at Number 6*

That same week the new release from Hear'say, the artificial clay-pot band composed of the, um, winners from the 'Popstars – The Rivals' TV talent show, topped the chart. 'Popstars –The Rivals' was the UK predecessor to the more universally known talent slump 'X-Factor'.

Murdoc: Hmmm ... So we went in at No.6 the same week as Hear'say went in at No. 1 with 'The Way To Your Love'. Obviously we hadn't manufactured ourselves quite as well as we thought. I must ask them what we were doing wrong.

Murdoc laughs so hard at this, beer shoots out the end of his nose.

While the '19-2000' footage was shipped over to the Passion Pictures Workshop for a wash and scrub up, it was time for Gorillaz to brush up on their Japanese vernacular and say '*konnichiwa*' to a whole new world.

'I've been around the world but I've never been to me' – NOODLE

August 15th 2001 *Gorillaz fly to Japan*

For their next set of promotional concerts Gorillaz undertook the lengthy journey to the Land of the Rising Sun: Japan.

The following is an extract from 2D's diary as featured in UK dance music magazine Seven, September 26th 2001:

'We left Heathrow on August 15th. Murdoc was green and sick and ill. He hadn't slept the night before 'cos he hates flying, so he was shitting himself. He acts all tough, but he's easily scared.

'Noodle just took the fast Fed-Ex crate home. Same way she arrived. It was a long flight for us. 13 hours. But I just watched the in-flight movies. They showed Tim Burton's new remake of "Ferris Bueller's Day Off". It's good, but even though all the costumes are better, you can't really beat the original.'

Murdoc: Thanks for that, D. Essential information.

The Gorillaz arrived at Nakita Airport in Tokyo at 9.00 am, and were immediately mobbed by ecstatic fans taking photos and offering gifts.

According to 2D they met Japanese film director Beat Takeshi, who expressed an interest in directing the Gorillaz film. 'He was wearing a yellow suit with drawings of pigs all over and a fluffy pig hat, but he wasn't joking and that scared me'.

August 16th 2001 *Osaka Imperial Hall, Japan*

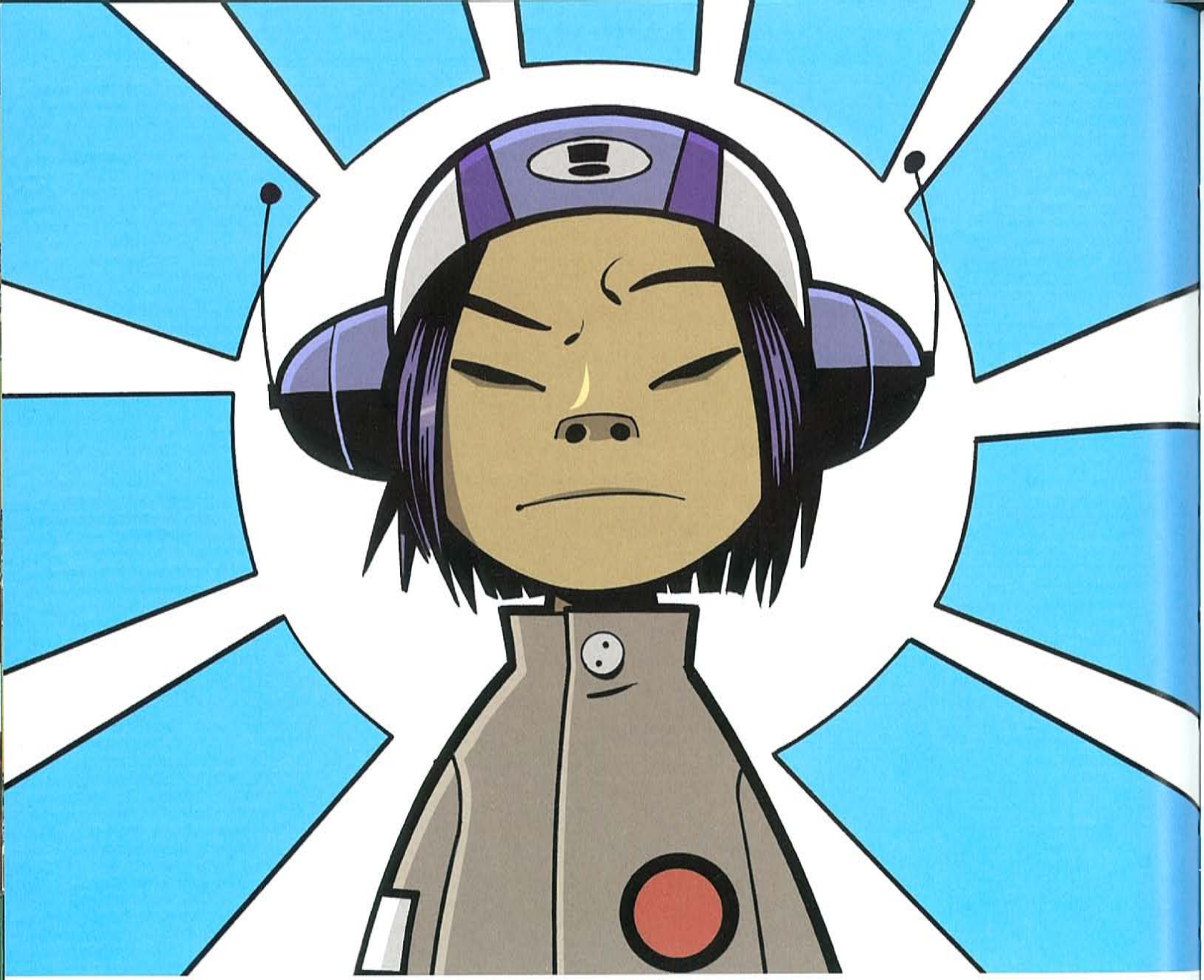
2D's Seven Magazine diary:

'This was our first ever gig in Japan. The concert promoter herded the audience into the centre of the room and then surrounded them with a cattle pen. The gig was just mental, but weirdly these kids just stopped dead at the end of each song and politely clapped, apart from one kid who threw some cabbage at Murdoc.

'Noodle was treated like some homecoming queen, but maybe she's just got a lot of mates there. I thought when we played "Punk" they were going to explode and "Soundcheck (gravity)" was so good I could see kids crying. I think the kids in Japan really understand where were coming from. I think they see so many arsey bands go over there acting like big boring rock stars, instead of giving them something really adventurous, that they're really open to it.'

August 17th 2001 *Gorillaz explore the city of Osaka*

BELOW
'Gorillaz in an alleyway in Osaka, having eaten Okonomiyaki, a local delicacy'
NOODLE



2D: Everyone says Osaka looks like Blade Runner but I reckon it's the other way round.

Murdoc: Brilliant. That's that solved then.

The city of Osaka was breathtaking, but throughout the day a growing sense of melancholy began to creep over Noodle.

Noodle: This was a very, very strange sensation for me. I hadn't been back to Japan for so long that I now felt like a . . . tourist. An outsider. *Gaijin*. It occurred to me that I really had no base now, no home. Something made me very sad. It wasn't immediate, but I believe this is when the dreams, the visions, began.

Noodle's night was long and restless, with broken sleep.

August 18th 2001 *Summer Sonic Festival - Tokyo Chiba Marine*

Bullet trains, crystal meth and rice crackers . . .

Summer Sonic is an annual 2-day rock festival held mid-August in Osaka and just outside Tokyo. Most bands playing in Osaka the first day go to Tokyo the following day and vice versa, in a similar style to the UK's Reading and Leeds festivals.

Other performers in the 2001 line-up included Air, Beck, Primal Scream, Slipknot, Rancid and Marilyn Manson. Gorillaz played Tokyo's Chiba Marine site, on the Dance stage.

Gorillaz took the early bullet train from Osaka to Tokyo and spent the morning exploring the Shibuya and Harajuka districts. Despite the excitement, Noodle's mood was resigned and quiet, a doleful disposition that Russel picked up on.

To lift her spirits, Russel bought her a jetpack from the store Tokyo Hands, which seem to take her mind off her nomadic existence for a while. For himself, Russel attempted to purchase a watch with a laser in it that cuts people in two. Unfortunately, the store had sold out.

Gorillaz arrived at the concert venue to perform a brief soundcheck prior to the evening's set. The club that night was at full capacity and Gorillaz played to 10,000, performing before The Orb.

2D: We were meant to be on stage at midnight but in the end we went on at about three in the morning. Which I think contributed to the eerie atmosphere. I had the strangest feeling I was being . . . watched.

Murdoc clamps his hands to his face and shakes his head.

2D from Seven Magazine:

'Today we played Summer Sonic. The Osaka gig was good, but the one in Tokyo was really mad. It was in this huge hangar, like a giant bus depot. All these Tokyo kids were whacked out of their heads on Crystal Meth. I wouldn't do that stuff even if it was free. Well, not if I've got to fly 'cos you get so dehydrated. Tonight we played like industrial light and magic on Imax.'

Russel remembers the event being a little more surreal.

Russel: The kids were like zombies. Just standing there swaying and staring. Ten thousand kids, totally silent. They sort of just dropped down one by one after a while. Strange . . .

Despite the otherworldly reception, Gorillaz then went on to celebrate their last night in Japan at a karaoke bar. Russel took the mic for an ear-splitting rendition of Bronski Beat's 'Small Town Boy', described by 2D as 'one of the most frightening things I've ever seen'. It was during this that Murdoc was beaten up for spilling some big bloke's sake.

Murdoc: I was dancing and my foot slipped. These things can't be helped sometimes.

Sunday August 19th 2001 *Gorillaz return to the UK*

ABOVE
'That's Noodle on her jetpack in the background, and 2D and Russ chowing down. Again'
MURDOC NICCALS

LEFT
The Japanese edition of 'G-sides'

2D's diary:

'Another 13 hours back. We only just managed to avoid the typhoon that had been threatening to hit Tokyo all week. It was so big that we were told it would suck up the whole city. Murdoc was crapping himself. He thought he was gonna get sucked off the plane. But it was fine.'

The jaunt to Japan was felt to have gone very well, but in hindsight Japan was initially very wary of Gorillaz. There was also a palpable sense of disappointment that Damon Albarn, as a Gorillaz collaborator, hadn't joined the band for the event, or if he did his presence was kept hidden behind the screens. Not the easiest idea for some people to grasp, Gorillaz were viewed by the Japanese as a side project for Damon rather than what it was: a brand-new concept in worldwide entertainment.

There was also a partial feeling that with the combination of digital marketing and animation assets, maybe Japan had seen the like of Gorillaz before.

Murdoc: Yeah. People always expected that to be one of the places we'd go down a storm. But maybe with the first album it was like shipping snow to Alaska.

Russel: We found out later that with Japan most of the promotion is done way upfront before the album comes out, and if the album doesn't take off they kind of drop it. It goes cold. So we decided to maybe do something about it.

Gorillaz released the 'G-sides' compilation album, specifically designed as a re-introduction for Japan, that would ignite Gorillaz' profile over there. It worked. The album would go on to sell half a million copies worldwide, a huge number for a collection of B-sides and remixes.

Russel: The 'G-sides' album worked very well over there. The record company had something more to focus on and, you know, second time round it kind of clicked. They got it.

Award. Take Me To A Ward.

July 25th 2001 *Gorillaz turn down Mercury Music Prize*

July saw Gorillaz ruffling more industry feathers with a controversial decision to turn down their nomination for that year's Mercury Music Prize. With odds set at 3 to 1 for them to WIN the award, and the possibility of generating up to 500,000 extra album sales, Gorillaz' record label were understandably panicked.

Gorillaz stuck to their guns, however, and with marvellous eloquence Murdoc Niccals released a statement to the press.

'Mercury Award? Sounds a bit heavy, man! Y'know, sort of like carrying a dead albatross round your neck for eternity. No thanks, man! Why don't you nominate some other poor Muppet?'

Murdoc: I was bang on the money with that one. That one'll sink your career faster than teaming up with Kevin Rowland on a concrete speedboat.

He may have a point as Mercury winners, both previously and since, have been notorious for following up their award success with low-selling or even career-killing albums. Previous winners had included Suede, M People, Pulp, Gomez, Portishead and Talvin Singh. It'd be fair to say the award did carry a certain level of bad fortune. Only Primal Scream with their chemically-strengthened, disease-deflecting blood seemed beyond long-term affliction.

Murdoc: Anyway. Apart from that it's a fix. It's chosen by a couple of trendies who wanna seem like they've got their finger on the pulse. It's the finger of death.

Gorillaz were accused by some of the press of being somewhat calculating, and the move just being a cynical ploy to boost sales. The award that year was eventually given to PJ Harvey for her album 'Stories From The City, Stories From The Sea', who in fairness may also have escaped the curse.

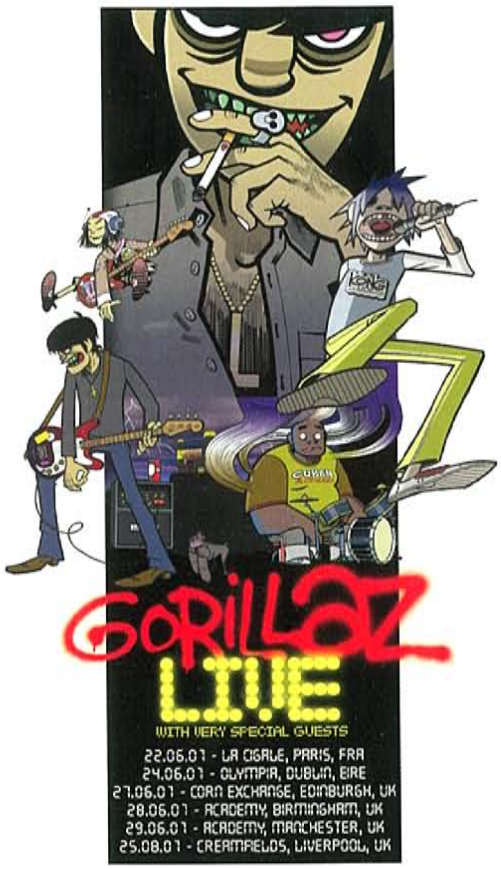
Ironically, and to many people's amusement, the ice-cool crown of credibility created by this bold rejection was knocked askew when the following month Gorillaz managed to slip very publicly on an unseen banana skin.

August 2001 *Gorillaz nominated for MTV2 Viewer's Choice Award*

Gorillaz had also been nominated for that year's MTV2 Viewer's Choice Award for the single 'Clint Eastwood'. Gorillaz were strongly believed to have won, having apparently received a tip-off from someone involved with organizing the event. In preparation, an acceptance speech was filmed, rumoured to have cost in the region of £20,000, co-incidentally the very amount that the Mercury award would have provided. You can't make it up, can you?

As it was, the engagement that had kept Gorillaz from appearing was cancelled, meaning that both 2D and Murdoc were able to attend the ceremony in New York.

ABOVE
'The infamous video acceptance speech for the MTV2 "Viewers Wrong Choice Award"'
MURDOC NICCALS


GORILLAZ
LIVE
WITH VERY SPECIAL GUESTS
22.06.01 - LA CIGALE, PARIS, FRA
24.06.01 - OLYMPIA, DUBLIN, EIRE
27.06.01 - CORN EXCHANGE, EDINBURGH, UK
28.06.01 - ACADEMY, BIRMINGHAM, UK
29.06.01 - ACADEMY, MANCHESTER, UK
25.08.01 - CREAMFIELDS, LIVERPOOL, UK

That evening, though, the combination of jet lag, a big meal and a couple of strong Woo Woo's had sent Murdoc to sleep in his seat before the first nomination was even read out. His loud phlegmy snoring disrupted the announcements several times.

However, this was nothing to the disturbance caused when he discovered that the award he thought was definitely in the bag went to none other than Mudvayne, a clownish theatrical metal band.

'What th . . . ?'

As the band took the stage to accept the award dressed in blood-splattered, bullet-holed costumes, Murdoc, spluttering on his drink, was incandescent with rage. Murdoc cursed the band, the stage, the presenter and the four or five rows in front of him, with language so blue it'd bum Miles Davis out.

*'Who the f**k are Mudflaps!?! Fu%#ing C**TS!!!!!!! YOU'RE ALL A BUNCH OF C@~ *!##!!'*

Murdoc stormed out of the building, kicking the back of every seat in the process, and with steam still pouring from his ears returned to his hotel immediately.

True to nature, Murdoc completely denied the incident and the loss of cool in the subsequent edition of The Face magazine, November 2001. When the journalist suggested that Gorillaz had wasted 20K on an acceptance speech for an award that they never won, Murdoc went on to say:

'You'd think that a publication such as THE FACE with all that experience would shy away from printing information gleaned from rumour-mongers. If you think I didn't get 20K of publicity out of it, then you're a bigger mug than your cover price suggests. I could stick 40K up your arse and still be in the black.'

The Face, amusingly, then suggested that the cost of recording the speech could have been covered with the cheque from the Mercury Music Prize, had they not rejected the nomination.

'Being artistically becalmed isn't worth £20,000, especially after tax. And when the albatross begins to putrefy it becomes just a bloody pulp.'

Indeed. Ultimately though, the pre-recorded acceptance speech didn't go to waste. Gorillaz picked up two awards at the MTV Europe Music Awards later that year in the categories, 'Best Dance' and 'Best Song'.

2D: Actually, I thought the only award we won was for 'Best Song and Dance'.

Russel: No, D. It was one in each category.

The British Dates

'We Rule Britannia' MURDOC NICCALS

After the distracting debacle with the award shows, Murdoc decided to take his frustration and annoyance out by smashing up eardrums the length and breadth of the UK. Gorillaz hastily booked some live shows to cater for the mad bass-player's whims.

August 25th 2001 *Creamfields Festival, Liverpool, UK*

Gorillaz played Liverpool's Creamfields festival, performing in front of 8,000 people in the 'Bugged Out' tent, before Orbital.

Murdoc: Bugged Out tent? More like the buggered-off tent. The second we started, the whole place turned into a mudbath, great clumps of earth flying everywhere. And why are we always getting put on in these geek tents? Sharing a bill with The Orb in Japan, Orbital at Creamfields. Load of balls, man. I don't get it.

September 2001 saw Gorillaz embark on their own four-day fiesta round Britain, with all concerts selling out within nanoseconds of tickets going on sale. Once again, using the same technique as they had done for their previous dates, Gorillaz took their giant screens and the four members played behind the white sheets. As per usual, Del manifested dutifully for his 'Clint Eastwood' and 'Rock the House' performances.

September 24th 2001 *Edinburgh Corn Exchange*
September 25th 2001 *Birmingham Academy*
September 26th 2001 *Manchester Academy*
September 28th 2001 *Forum, London*

Their first flush of proper touring was a novel experience. Gorillaz slipped into the secret glamorous world of Ginsters, Little Chefs, sleeping on bunks, dreaming of tarmac, eternal soundchecks, ringing ears, stale riders, sweaty post-gig T-shirts and endless, endless, endless motorways.

The bass player, Capt. Niccals, purchased giant maps of the world, marking off territories he had yet to enslave. Swigging from a bottle of grog, he drew a trail round the globe noting each country and continent he intended to bash on the head with his record.

In the back of the bus, 2D attempted unsuccessfully once again to complete a Rubik's cube.

2D: It's always just the last two bricks, I can't seem to get the last two to fit . . .

A moron stuck in a moron's world. Nice chap, though.

Noodle used her time to talk to the vast nation of Gorillaz fans online. The website was now a heaving mass of users, the virtual online world of Kong Studios growing like some kind of doubling, cell-splitting amoeba daily.

Gorillaz tribute sites were springing up all over the web, some as an homage, some as extensions to the original and some simply set up to document and decipher the ever-evolving world of rubbish that Gorillaz lived in.

One distinctively detailed site, Gorillaz Unofficial, was so fastidious in its documentation that Gorillaz themselves were keen members. Noodle in particular was a fan of Gorillaz Unofficial, frequently logging on to verify details of her own existence, and making sure that she got her facts right in interviews.

Noodle: I think 2D only discovered that his own original surname was Tusspot from Gorillaz Unofficial. It has every fact, figure and detail of all things Gorillaz.

Murdoc: I woke up one morning and found one of the programmers from that set-up, just staring at me, taking notes. They're digital stalkers, I tell you. I was writing the lyrics to one new tune and as I was doing it, they were appearing on that website simultaneously. They've got us wired up, seriously. This book'll be on there before you've even finished it, if you're not careful.

Meanwhile, instead of arguing like a dunce with the others over the PlayStation, Russel occupied himself with making beats and tunes on his new laptop. It was between Manchester and Birmingham that Hobbs programmed all the music for Gorillaz' track 'The Sounder'. He drafted in two rappers, Si and Life from the rap duo Phi Life Cypher, to complete the vocals during the post-gig trek back to London. This track became a 'Rock the House' B-side and later appeared on the G-sides album. Time well used, eh? By the time Gorillaz arrived in London the track had been mixed, mastered and was ready to release.

On stage, the band played seamlessly on all dates right up until the London show. At the Forum, Russel dropped a beat in '5/4'. The audience didn't notice but it was enough to throw the rest of the band.

Russel: A momentary lapse of judgement. Some prankster had written '4/5' on my setlist and for a second I had to do a recount.

2D: Though we played it a second time, note perfect, for the encore. So I don't know what Murdoc's problem was. He did go mental, though.

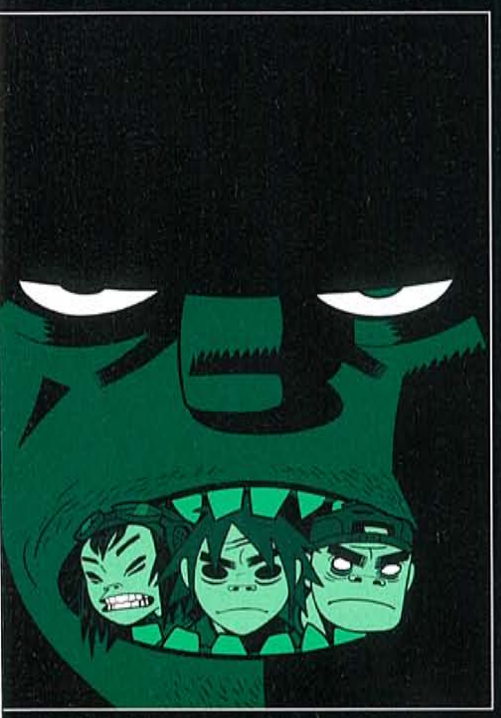
Russel: I think the whole fame thing was going to his head. We were in this together, not Murdoc's skivvies. I noticed that he began to dominate every interview more and more.

The reception from the audience at the Forum show was euphoric. Reviews of these concerts, however, ranged from benevolent approval to venomous criticism.

The Guardian gave a fairly luke-warm appraisal indicating that the Gorillaz album and the concert performance were good, but the inability to see the live musicians made the evening drag somewhat.

The NME adjusted their earlier opinion to suggest that *'the tunes and the show were just so-so. As gimmicks go, Gorillaz aren't even a good one. Resist at all costs.'*

The doubts about Gorillaz that had been held in check in the album reviews were unleashed in full for the live reviews. The less affectionate notices for the Forum gig read as if the Gorillaz project was an empty intellectual



exercise, a condescending way of pulling the wool over their audience's eyes. If that were true, it would have been the most pedantic, expensive and elaborate way to humiliate a crowd since Francis Drake sailed to America just to pick up potatoes and tobacco.

Russel: The main complaint seemed to be that no one could see us other than in silhouette. But we assumed everyone would understand it was Gorillaz playing behind the screen. It was an exercise in devaluing the ego. The projections and animations said everything that we wanted them to.

Murdoc: What is this? It's not like I smashed a pie into the reviewer's face. We played a gig! Chill out, mate. It was a *concert* not a cocking art installation. Jesus. I'm going for a slash.

Russel took a positive attitude to the editorial mauling.

Russel: A successful person is someone who can lay a firm foundation from the bricks that are thrown at them. There's nothing a critic could say at this stage that would change the strength of my vision.

Murdoc (shouting over the sound of his own urine stream): Y'know, behind every critic I feel there's a really talented musician just bursting to get out . . .

Murdoc laughs out loud, gives himself a quick shake and then rejoins Russel.

Russel: Maybe we removed ourselves one step too far. We negotiated ourselves into a corner, till our backs were against the wall. The 'arch-ness' of the screens was maybe a bridge too far.

Murdoc zips up and sits down.

Murdoc: Walls, arches, bridges? It's a gig, Russ. Nothing more. Not a lesson in architecture. Perhaps we can . . . er . . . 'build' on this, anyway. I'm . . . er . . . not really bothered by all this. Why? Flick to the end of the book. I know how this story ends. I tell you another thing, right. I've had to overcook this bit. It wasn't nearly as bad as we've made out.

Russel: What do you mean?

Murdoc: I'm telling you, flick to the end of the book. By this point on the second album the reviews were so good it'll make you sick. If we make this bit about the Forum gig look a touch shoddy, it'll balance out the ending. Anyway, I won't say anymore. I don't want to ruin the plot.

Russel: What? Er . . . I'm not . . .

Murdoc: Look, it doesn't matter. Just shift your arse, Hobbs, we've got D12 coming over in a minute . . .

Chapter 5
A Storm is Brewing

'We are one, and one is all
We are, we are, we are one
And one is all'

Gorillaz and D12 ft Terry Hall in '911'

September 2001 saw Detroit rappers D12 in the UK to promote their debut album 'Devil's Night' – minus their most famous member, Eminem. Gorillaz and D12 took the opportunity to record their long-mooted collaboration, and in preparation, Russel put together some ideas for the song that eventually became '911'.

Russel: We'd laid a couple of beats and sounds down for two separate tracks, with one being maybe a little more upbeat. The hook-up between us and D12 had been on for a while, so we made sure we had a couple of things ready to go.

The collaboration, recorded at Kong Studios, took on a new direction when the World Trade Centre in New York was destroyed by two hijacked planes on September 11th. D12 were left stranded in London, unable to return to the US. The track deals with the extreme violence of the attacks.

Russel: That just changed the whole atmosphere altogether. Planes for New York were cancelled, the news channels were on 24-7, the expectation for the situation to escalate into immediate retaliation was constant. No one knew what was gonna happen next.

Murdoc refused to be cast down by the uncertainty in world affairs. Determined to show the visiting dignitaries a good time, he primed Kong with a slick selection of premium 'rapper' booze.

Along with its usual cargo of tissue samples, turds and mouldy cheese, the studio fridge held 17 crates of Cristal (procured at nightclub prices), a skipful of Hennessy and a keg of Watney's Red Barrel.

Murdoc: Plus a giant can of Dr Pepper's.

BELOW
Terry Hall
Proof, D12

In light of recent events his levity could be misconstrued as disrespect, but in this case is was probably more out of awkwardness, and an ignorance of how to react.

That morning, Murdoc had also taken delivery of £75,000 worth of diamond-studded motorised scooter, an executive toy sure to impress any large, scary MC. High on the lethal combination of Dr Pepper's, Watneys and a 'smidgen' of brandy, Murdoc zoomed up and down the corridors of Kong at an unprecedented 11.5mph, while his bandmates and D12 ignored him and got down to work.

D12's parts were recorded in a business-like three hours, each rapper taking a verse. A combination of motion-sickness and extreme drunkenness meant that a giddy Murdoc was unable to supply his bass lines during the session. His parts were recorded later that week, along with the vocals of another guest contributor, ex-Specials frontman Terry Hall.

Murdoc: But both my bass and Terry's vocals, when they did go down, really finished the track off. So everything worked out fine, once again.

The result of the session was '911', an ominous, disorientating track that spoke to the mood of the world after the attacks on New York. '911' was made available online only through Gorillaz.com and D12's website in November 2001. A video to accompany the track was also later made available for download.

Swifty of D12 said of working with Gorillaz: 'It was cool. They showed much love. We chose some beats, we went on a vibe, a nice vibe. We enjoyed working with them, they have a nice flava.'

Terry Hall also paid tribute to his collaborators: 'When I first heard what D12 did I was amazed, such unedited emotion. The track is all about opening your heart and your mind.'

2D: I remember when I turned the TV on and saw that image: of the plane going into the first tower. It literally took the air out of my lungs. Just the impact in my head of understanding what I was seeing. A plane crashing into a tower . . . *that* tower. It just made me literally fall backwards. Just that moment of realisation of, like, the full implications of what this meant. The atmosphere where we were wasn't dark, not even moody, just really odd . . . fragile. No one knew what was gonna happen next.

Russel: It felt like the world could explode any second. I think I slept twenty minutes that whole night . . . maybe an hour the next. A lot of terrible seeds were sown that day.

Noodle: It's the failure to see this planet as a single entity that causes so much pain so many times. You cannot attack one part of the world without it affecting the whole earth, the whole body. Attacking other cultures, other nations, is a self-destructive act. It always comes back on you in some way.

Russel: There's also a kind of . . . pornography involved in the analysis. The facts, the statistics, the news. It seems to make a demand that everything has to be bigger, to escalate . . . the world is gonna O.D. on this mentality. 'This war has to outgross the last one', 'this film has to outsell the last one', 'this thing has to be more dramatic'. It's got to stop. It's a pornography of war, violence, of terror, of fear, of gluttony. It's bad, man, really bad. It makes people very . . . jumpy.

Murdoc: Er . . . Can we get back to all the slapstick stuff? This thing's really messing with the whole pace of the book.

Rock The House

'Graviational pull, I'll have you making a fool out of yourself on the dance floor' DEL, THE GHOST RAPPER

For the third UK single there was again debate as to whether to go with '5/4' or the apparently poppier track 'Rock the House'. A long series of Chinese whispers travelled through the Gorillaz camp and record label Parlophone. The overall opinion seemed to be that 'Rock the House' would be a bigger hit internationally.

Murdoc: *Panpipes!?!*

When the band talked through the single choice with Jamie Hewlett, a number of ideas were discussed. Jamie, though, was already preoccupied with a perturbing lawsuit that had just landed on his desk.

An unknown virtual group called Dopplegangerz were insisting that the concept for Gorillaz, which they incorrectly assumed had been manufactured by Jamie Hewlett, was in fact their idea. They stated that Jamie, in collusion with Murdoc, had taken their original idea and used it to form Gorillaz. They were now bizarrely claiming 50% ownership over Gorillaz, Jamie's thoughts, his brain and his likeness. They also wanted rights over any thoughts that Jamie might have in the future.

Murdoc: Number one, we're not a concept, and number two, if we are then I'm the manufacturer. So in future send your poxy lawsuits marked 'For the Attention Of M. Niccals, Kong Studios, Essex.' OK? And I'll see that it gets filed right in the middle of your mush.

The stress of the legal wrangle bothered Jamie, and this sense of being under attack manifested itself as part of the 'Rock the House' video. With his mind on other things it could be suggested that the idea for this video, and maybe even the release, was a little flimsy . . .

ABOVE
The online sleeve for '911', the D12 and Gorillaz collaboration

ROCK THE HOUSE

Jamie Hewlett: That was when we first found out that we were going to be sued, and I was livid. And I also had to have a holiday. I hadn't had a holiday in like, two years, and I was knackered. So I had to come up with a storyboard really quickly.

A striking and distinctive colour template of blue, red and white was chosen for the video.

Noodle: The overall theme of this video was inspired by the 1969 William Klein film 'Mister Freedom'. This film, featuring Mr Donald Pleasance, is quite rare, but the costume and set designs are very arresting. We decided to use the same colour elements to make the visuals for our video more definitive.

Jamie Hewlett: So the idea was to take a bit of 'Mister Freedom' but do a 'Rollerball' type thing, using the 'Mister Freedom' colour schemes and characters. The choice of the record was wrong, though, I thought it was a really bad choice of single; it didn't have 2D's voice on it.

Murdoc: Yeah, anyway, we made the video into a kind of 'Rollerball' meets 'Mister Freedom' mash-up. It kinda reflected what was going on with us. It felt like people were just shooting at us, and as a band we had to avoid the bullets, the attacks. Some of Gorillaz chose to avoid them, while some of them, i.e. myself, chose to face them head on and physically deflect the incoming missiles.

Noodle: We dressed Del up like Mister Freedom, so that he could perform his rap while stamping his way across the studio set.

Murdoc: I just love the way in that film Mister Freedom enters the building by kicking his way through the window, and then just stomps into the room. For a while I did that, every place I entered. That movie's got Serge Gainsbourg in it. I think I might be related to him, actually, saucy old soak that he was.

2D: Do you know how difficult it was to pick up a costume big enough to fit Del? In the video he's puffed his body out to 100ft or more.

Jamie left strict instructions as to how the video should look and be shot; the internal themes and the overall message of the film. However, with Mr Hewlett on holiday, Gorillaz were left mainly to complete the final details of the day's shoot themselves.

Murdoc: I thought what I'd do in the film was to get people to fire cannonballs at me and I'd, like, bounce them away using the power of my, er . . . nob. It was Steve-O from Jackass who showed me how to do this. He's mental.

At great expense Passion Pictures designed a specific set of reinforced underwear for Mister Niccals, complete with an armour-plated crotch. After the events of the 'Clint Eastwood' video, the production company couldn't afford to incur any further damage to Murdoc's crown jewels.

The video opens on the exterior of Kong, and we soar across the thunder-soaked rain-splattered graveyard, the silhouettes of the 'Clint Eastwood' zombie apes still stalking the midnight cemetery.

KO
18

The camera pulls in to the twin boys who stalk the corridors of Kong and we enter the building. Noodle is seen zooming through the hallways on her tricycle in a scene reminiscent of Kubrick's 'The Shining'.

Murdoc: Reminiscent? That's a laugh, isn't it? It's exactly the same.

Bursting through the double doors into a white room, we see Gorillaz start up the song. Within seconds the room fills with a ghostly gas, signalling the arrival of none other than the phantom Del. We soon realise that Gorillaz are performing directly on top of the wayward spirit. As his huge frame rises up, Noodle is thrown clear.

Del marches across the set almost stamping upon the tiny figure of Noodle. The set morphs into the inside of a sports rink. Out of the sides of the arena gun turrets appear. The cannon barrels are lowered and commence firing at the band. Del is the first to come under attack, and using his giant gloved hands he deflects the onslaught.

As this action unfolds, a troupe of inflatable monkey cheerleaders rise up from the floor, air filling their saggy shells as they come to life.

Murdoc: Normally this is the point I wake up.

Pete Candeland at Passion Pictures choreographed an intricate and elaborate dance routine for the puffed-up gibbons; as they wave their pom-poms, the camera weaves in and out of their rubbery limbs.

The exact origins of the idea for using the monkey dance troupe are unknown. However, in order to replicate the dance moves exactly it was decided to use one Computer Generated gorilla model, and then multiply the action repeatedly in post-production.

Cara Speller (Gorillaz video producer): It's a slightly bizarre video. I'm not sure where the idea for the whole inflatable well-titted gorillas came from. They were identical CG gorillas though; it was just one CG model.

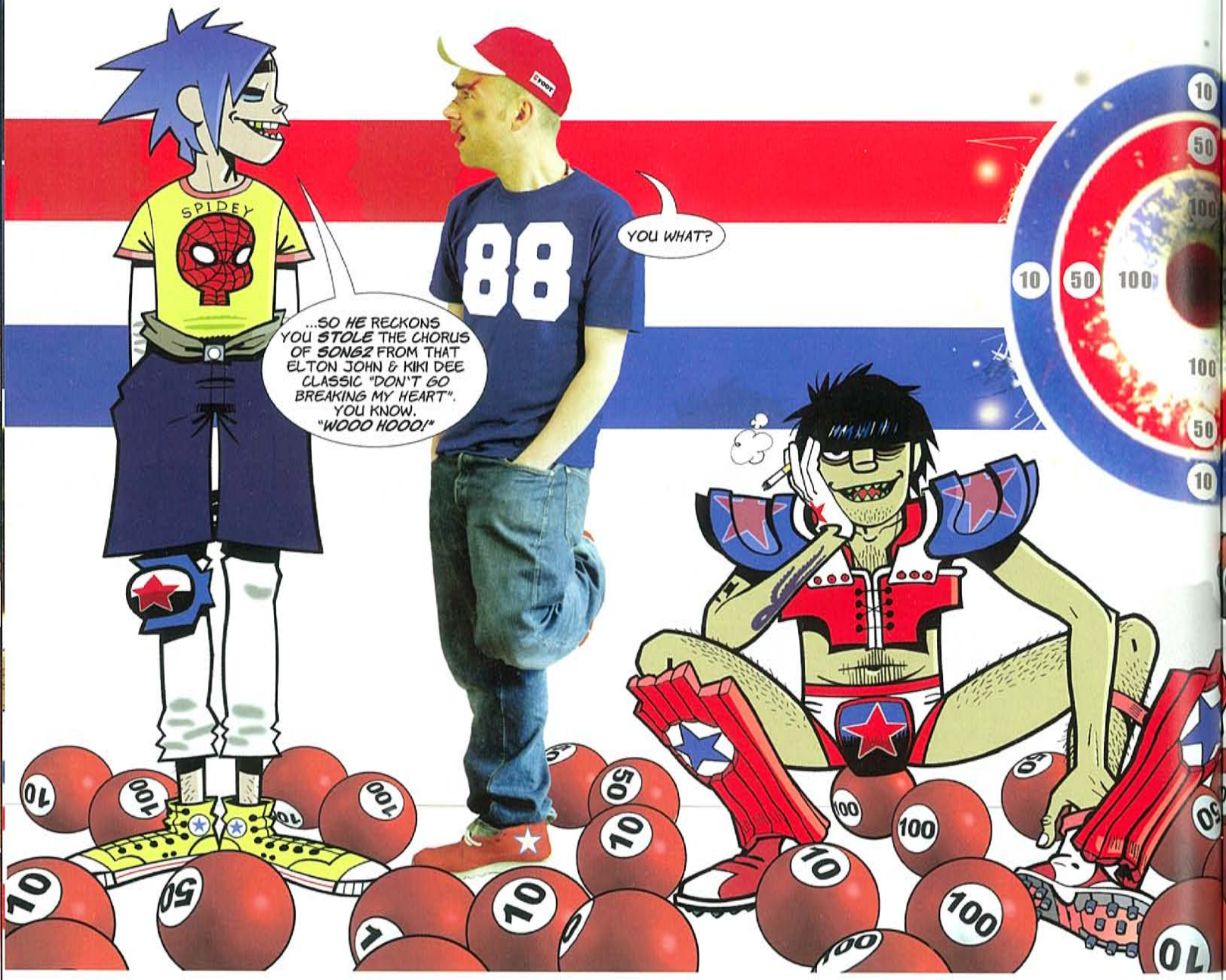
2D is the next to come under fire, managing to swerve a fair amount of the projectiles until eventually he's hit, his skinny frame sent flying.

Relishing the gameplay, Murdoc takes his place, snaps on his pair of action pants and invites the assault from the ball-firing cannons.

POW!! POW!! POW!!

With style, panache and a variety of lewd moves, Murdoc thrusts his and the band's way to safety; the final deflection rouses Russel, and returns the band to their original state. As the action reaches its conclusion, the film is wound backward and we're left once again outside of Kong's iron-clad gates.

ABOVE
Del, the Ghost Rapper, made up as Mister Freedom for the 'Rock the House' video


SPIDEY
88
...SO HE RECKONS YOU STOLE THE CHORUS OF SONG2 FROM THAT ELTON JOHN & KIKI DEE CLASSIC "DON'T GO BREAKING MY HEART". YOU KNOW. "WOOO HOOO!"
YOU WHAT?

2D: I haven't a clue what that video was about.

Murdoc: Join the club. I'd had a lot of fun on the day, but looking back, it's anybody's guess what was happening. And now it's just messing up the story line of this book. We should have deleted that track there and then. That's the last time I listen to a record label's advice about what a single should be.

The 'Rock the House' video turned out to be a very costly indulgence, accompanying a track that the band weren't happy with and that ultimately wasn't very commercial. In fairness, though, everyone felt – prior to release – that as 'Rock the House' was the last proper single from the album it would be good to go out with a bang. This would not be the last time the Big Bang Theory would be followed ...

October 13th 2001 *Gorillaz feature on the cover of NME*

As a promotional press piece, Gorillaz, alongside collaborators Damon and Jamie, were photographed on the set of the 'Rock the House' video for the cover of the NME. Both Albarn and Hewlett look worse for wear, covered in scars and bruises as if they themselves have taken part in the on set antics.

The feature was a retrospective look at the previous year in the lives of Gorillaz and how the human pair had faired in cartoon land, their minds and bodies left shaken, rattled and rolled. The piece marked another landmark in the penetration and perception of the Gorillaz phenomenon.

October 22nd 2001 *Rock the House single released reaching Number 18*

ABOVE
Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett on the set of 'Rock the House'

Gorillabitez

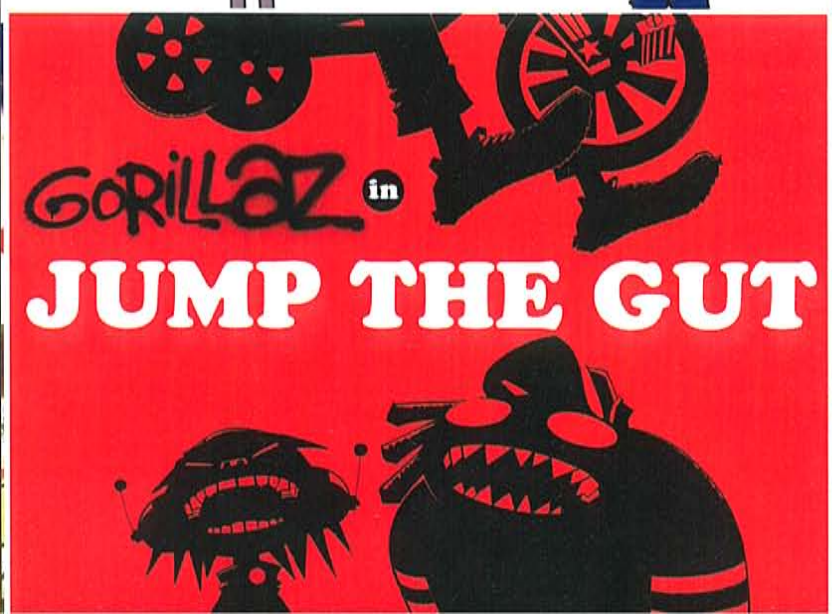
It was around this time the Gorillaz released a series of sketches, ingenious miniature pieces of footage which Gorillaz either acted or appeared in. These were named 'Gorillabitez' and were sent out to TV companies and stations to allow audiences to see Gorillaz in a format other than just their videos. They also served the basic purpose of promoting Gorillaz in an interesting and unusual way.

Many sketches were written and proposed, but in all, on the first album, only five were ever fully completed and released. These were titled as follows: 'The Eel', 'Hey! Our Toys Have Arrived', 'Free Tibet Campaign', 'Game Of Death' and 'Jump the Gut'.

A sixth sketch, 'Fancy Dress', was eventually completed but remained unreleased for some time.

Murdoc: Mmm. I think this is where I first got a taste for acting. I looked really dashing in that hat and those boots.

Jamie Hewlett: Gbitez happened because with the first album the audiences wanted to have more animation with the characters, because all they'd had up to then was the characters in videos singing the songs. They didn't have any film of the characters talking to each other or any stupid stuff like that. Videos were all we did, apart from radio interviews. And I didn't want to do a TV series 'cos I thought that was a shit idea. So we came up with idea of doing these . . . almost like little sketches.



Russel: The Gorillabitez. They were basically little snapshots into our lives, just so people get an idea of how Gorillaz live and operate. We ended up sending them out to TV stations in various countries and they went down really well. They were fun to make too.

2D: We didn't want to do the usual thing of going to a studio and being interviewed or just stand in front of a camera answering stupid questions, so we came up with these.

Murdoc: Some of them were just things that happened, some of them were scripted. 'The Eel' Gorillabite was a true story. A mate of mine who's a chef was working in this place, and couldn't kill this eel which he was meant to be cooking for the lunch menu. The head chef came in, with a stinking hangover, grabbed the eel and shoved its face onto the gas. And that's how you kill an eel, apparently. Melt its face. We made it into a sketch . . .

Russel: For the 'Game of Death' bite, me and Noodle re-enacted the scene from the Bruce Lee film. But as the camera pulls out you can see that we're being controlled by Murdoc and 2D. Murdoc's cheating, obviously.

Murdoc: I tell you what, a couple of other groups should take a look at how we work. It'd help them out. I'd rather see some band release their own version of Gbitez than watch them

BELOW
'The Eel', Gorillabite

OVER PAGE, LEFT
'Game of Death', Gorillabite

OVER PAGE, RIGHT
'Jump the Gut', Gorillabite

+なぐり
Punch!
ケリ
Kick!
ケリ
Kick!
ケリ
Kick!
ジャブ
Jab!
大丈夫ガい
Come on big ox...

OK Del, I'll see your one thousand...
...and raise you five hundred.

ABOVE
'Hey! Our Toys Have Arrived', Gorillabite

sit on a sodding sofa talking about guitar strings. It's not people that are interesting, it's ideas. And most people don't have any.

Russel: Although those Gorillabitez did cost around £60,000 each to make.

Murdoc: So, er, unless you're selling a few records, you'll have to get them made over at Rationed Pictures, 'cos you won't be able to afford the real thing.

Fame brought many things to Gorillaz, some good, others not so good. 2D was plunged into a state of deep anxiety. His fragile public persona, the confusion as to his true identity, and audiences' inability to see him as a real person were beginning to create an unsettling combination in his head. It required further analysis using his tiny dented brain.

2D: Like David Bowie said, 'Sometimes I don't feel as if I'm a person at all. I'm just a collection of other people's ideas'.

Murdoc: That's not even your own quote.

2D: I know.

2D looks round.

2D: Do you think it's possible to be eaten alive by your own alter-ego?

Russel: I think we're all born as the alter-ego and need to crawl out the belly of the beast. It's a journey of self-discovery. Give it time, D, you'll make it.

Murdoc: I'm just nipping down to the pub. I should be back in about half an hour.

This confusion as to the notion of self and the purpose of his fame led 2D to seek out something of more spiritual worth. It was for this reason that he was drawn towards Buddhism and to the plight of the Tibetan monks. 2D's backing of the Free Tibet campaign was demonstrated in the 'Free Tibet Campaign' Gorillabite, in which he is seen in silent protest outside the Chinese Embassy.

ABOVE
'Fancy Dress', Gorillabite

Free Tibet Campaign stands for the Tibetans' right to determine their own future. It campaigns for an end to China's occupation of Tibet and for the Tibetans' fundamental human rights to be respected. Founded in 1987, Free Tibet Campaign generates active support by educating people about the situation in Tibet. It is independent of all governments and is funded by its members and supporters.

BELOW
'Free Tibet Campaign', Gorillabite

www.freetibet.org

Charts of Darkness

To round off what had been a truly phenomenal year by anybody's standards, the UK television company Channel Four, in conjunction with Dazed Film and TV, commissioned an investigative documentary on Gorillaz, entitled 'Charts of Darkness'. The exploration was lead by respected Channel Four News Reporter Krishnan Guru-Murthy, who in his introduction had this to say:

Krishnan Guru-Murthy: *This is the story of the year's most unlikely success, of a new concept in entertainment that needed investigation. The band I'm talking about has in the last fourteen months become Britain's biggest musical export to America. Their first hit stayed in the Top 20 for fourteen weeks. Their website receives more visitors than every other artist on this label combined. And they've won major awards in rock, dance and hip hop categories on both sides of the Atlantic. I'm talking about Gorillaz, a two-dimensional animated band.*

Murdoc: Nice intro. A shame he had to slip in the old 'two dimensional' line, though.

Krishnan then follows a wild goose chase that takes him from the offices of Dazed & Confused, to Tony Wadsworth, CEO of EMI, through to Rachel Stevens from the Ex-S Club 7 band, in an attempt to track down the truth behind the Gorillaz operation.

His efforts are further hindered when his path is crossed by various timewasters in the shape of a police impostor, an unregistered psychiatrist and a very suspicious-looking nurse.

Murdoc: It's quite surprising that someone of Krishnan's social standing and professional stature would allow themselves to be hoodwinked into such a farce, but there you go.

Along the way we get interviews with many of Gorillaz' collaborators or advocates, such as Terry Hall, Gorillaz.com operators, various Passion Pictures artists and animators who worked on Gorillaz' videos and also some of the unfortunate girls that have had the misfortune to have been coaxed back to Murdoc's mobile home.

Several of the freshly finished Gorillazbitez shorts were premiered in this programme.

The documentary ends when Krishnan finally tracks down Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett, and quizzes

them both on the nature of their involvement and the true intentions of the Gorillaz project.

Naturally their answers are guarded and misleading, but the overall impression was that the Gorillaz project was a pioneering experiment into re-defining the way music and entertainment were delivered; by removing the egos of the creators it allowed far more space for the work itself to breathe.

Murdoc: How ironic. Jamie and Damon have taken narcissism to a new level with the release of their 'Don't film me, I'm not in Gorillaz' documentary. Too right.

The four actual members of Gorillaz all refused to be involved in a film that was seen from the start as playfully puckish but ultimately a waste of time. It does remain, however, a wonderful, if somewhat draining, piece of work. If you've got 22 minutes to kill, give it a glance. The documentary, a blend of drama, animation and humour, can now be found on Gorillaz first DVD, 'Celebrity Take Down'.

December 12th 2001 *'Charts of Darkness' airs on Channel 4; it is later shown around Europe and the US*

As an introduction for the uninitiated, 'Charts of Darkness' served its purpose in documenting the haphazard, chaotic and sometimes downright demented career of the fun-fuelled four piece.

December 15th 2001 *Bristol Academy, UK*

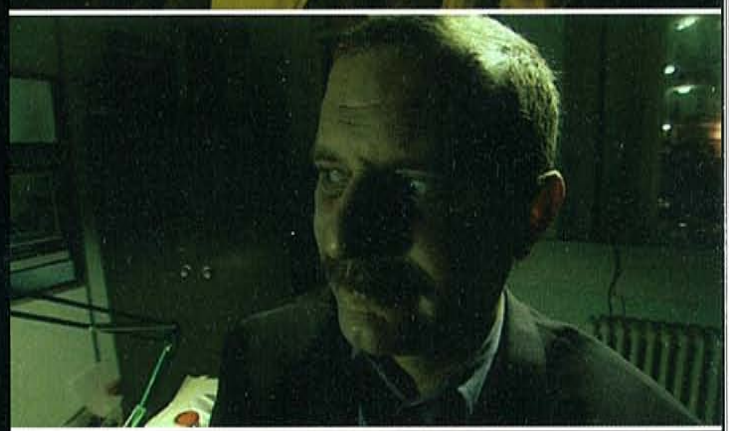
December 17th 2001 *Fabric, London, UK*

The final activity for Gorillaz that year was two UK concerts, benefit shows for the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Afghanistan. Appearing alongside Gorillaz were Massive Attack and Death In Vegas's Richard Fearless.

The first night at Bristol Academy, Gorillaz were also joined by Geoff Barrow of Portishead, Howie B, Asian Dub Foundation DJs, James Lavelle's UNKLE project and Scott Hendy.

For the Fabric concert in London two days later, Barrett and Hendy were absent, although Daft Punk and Pulp also appeared. All the artists, other than Gorillaz, performed DJ sets.

Russel: The money raised went towards helping ease the humanitarian crisis that had broken out in Afghanistan



since the American and British air attacks began back at the beginning of October.

On these occasions, the footage projected onto the Gorillaz screens had been updated to include dramatic footage from the Afghanistan war. It was clear that Gorillaz were throwing their weight behind dissenters and anti-war campaigners.

Irrespective of this sombre tone, however, the four Gorillaz had finished 2001 on an unbeatable high, with the album, the singles and the band themselves topping most end of year polls internationally.

Murdoc: Great! Those gigs were a really far-out way to end the year. In the space of one year we'd become one of the biggest bands on the planet, which – correct me if I'm wrong – is what I said would happen. I tell you what, though, I was a bit disturbed about that old goat Paulo Skinbacio, the so-called director, turning up at that last gig. I could see him in the crowd. He just stood at the back of the hall screwing me out. If he's got a problem with me he should just say and we can . . . straighten it out, like.

After these two concerts, Gorillaz returned to Kong for a well-earned break. Even committed Satanist Murdoc found it in his fag-stained heart to raise a glass of absinthe or two, and release some Yuletide greetings to Gorillaz fans throughout the country. Although with a typical sly salutation he paid covert respect to his mate 'old Nick'.

Murdoc: I got a lovely present that year from an unknown well-wisher, a hefty 15th century grimoire called the 'Pseudomonarchia Daemonum'. I had a lot of fun with that thing. It's a demonic recipe book, and boy did I cook up some trouble with it!

The days of Stoke-on-Trent, Tony Chopper and Murdoc's bullying father now seemed a very distant memory. That Xmas, Murdoc 'Scrooge' McNiccals threw open the gates of Kong to host an open house festive party that spanned the whole of the biffin's bridge period, from Xmas day to that little bit after New Year's Day.

2D: Patrick Moore turned up. He'd done all the voice-overs for our Christmas TV adverts and after that we couldn't get rid of him . . . for ages!

Murdoc: Yeah, I mean what the hell was he wearing? Crazy.

Rivers of booze flowed through the corridors of Kong, as wave upon wave of celebrity guests swam upstream to party with the animated popstars. This left the bullish bass-slayer a little fuzzy round the edges come January.

Murdoc: Eurgh!! That was a big one. I felt awful for weeks after that.

2D: Well, as my mum used to say, 'Drink like a fish and you'll end up battered'.

Time to plop in a couple of Alka-Seltzers then, Niccals. It's a whole new year and the ripe land of America awaits your pirate-y plundering skills. Anchors, away!

ABOVE
Gorillaz Xmas 2001 poster
'Happy Xmas, kids!'
UNCLE MURDOC

Chapter 6
The Rubber Mallet of the Gods

'The percentage of us toe the line
The rest of us out of reach
Everybody party time
Some of us will never sleep again'

Brit Awards 2002

A three-week tour of North America had been arranged for Gorillaz to make their live debut in the US and spread their mucky simian empire a little further. But before they set sail there was just one other small matter to attend to.

The Brits 2002 saw Gorillaz nominated in a staggering six categories, the highest amount of nominations for a single group ever. For the Gorillaz' performance at the awards show the feeling was that they would have to do something singular, exceptional.

February 20th 2002 *Gorillaz perform at the Brit Awards 2002, Earls Court, London*

Murdoc: We had the attention of the entire world's entertainment industry and millions of TV viewers that night. We weren't gonna blow it. Playing behind the screen just wasn't going to cut it this time.

For this one-off TV spectacular, Gorillaz designed a flash new-look stage show; cutting-edge technology involving a system of giant screens each 18ft tall that would allow the super-sized Gorillaz to appear in a giant, larger-than-life size.

Murdoc: That way you could see us play properly, for real. Not behind a screen, but right on top of them, in front of your face like gigantic thugs. Up until then we'd only played, brilliantly, behind the projections on the white sheets, but this time the world was gonna see each and every god-like move I . . . we, made. The Gorillaz band in full effect!

Russel: The reaction in the room that night was pretty incredible, and always playing live, it's the biggest pay-off. People were screaming and shouting for us, these towering apparitions, on colossal video screens. They were freaking out as much as if Madonna, U2 or The Beatles were on stage.

Murdoc: Russel. If I was at a gig in 2002, and I saw The Beatles performing live, I think I'd freak out too.

There were many moments when the Passion production team hired to execute this stage show were unsure as to whether the performance would even work.

Cara Speller (Gorillaz visual producer): Oh, yeah! Until it was over! There's a wealth of technology out there and whichever one you use there comes a point where some of it's out of your control. Certainly as a producer that's the most uncomfortable moment, the thought that anything could be out of your control. And it is. I'm sure the band are loving it but I tend to sit there with my heart in my mouth, praying and crossing everything that I can cross until the whole thing's over.

Murdoc: Whereas I'm usually just having a tiny little bit of extra make-up to make sure my green face doesn't look too shiny in front of the cameras.

Cara Speller: So much work went into that performance. It's months and months and months and days and nights and weekends of everyone's time and the thought that anything about it could not be to its full potential is really heartbreaking. So yes, it's always nerve-wracking and there are always things that you never thought could go wrong that do go wrong, right at the last minute to keep you on your toes.

Murdoc: The performance Gorillaz gave was just . . . we were incredible that night. Actually, I performed incredibly *all* night in fact. We had to leave for America the next day and I almost missed the flight. After the gig I got talking to both Kylie and Dannii Minogue and . . . er . . . I lost track of time. Ah . . . Happy days.

Gorillaz, despite the magnificent performance, controversially left the award show empty-handed.

Murdoc: Outrageous really. Six categories, a mind-blowing, future-defining stage show and not a single win. Anyway, whatever, despite what you said I didn't leave exactly 'empty-handed'.

ABOVE
Brit Awards Show, 2002

The North American Tour 2002

February 21st 2002 *Gorillaz depart for America*

Murdoc made the flight with seconds to spare ...

Murdoc: Our own plane was still up on bricks in the garage so I just grabbed a pot of paint and a spray can and then customized one at the airport.

February 23rd 2002 *Toronto Docks, Canada*
February 25th 2002 *Avalon, Boston USA*
February 26th 2002 *Washington DC 9:30 Club, USA*
February 28th 2002 *New York Hammerstein Ballroom, USA*
March 1st 2002 *Philadelphia Electric Factory, USA*
March 3rd 2002 *Chicago Aragon Ballroom, USA*
March 5th 2002 *Seattle Paramount, USA*
March 7th 2002 *San Francisco Warfield, USA*
March 8th 2002 *Los Angeles Palladium, USA*
March 9th 2002 *Los Angeles Palladium, USA*
March 11th 2002 *Palacio de los Deportes, Mexico City, Mexico*

The North American Tour had been planned to unveil the Gorillaz live show to the US and also ran alongside the Stateside release of Gorillaz 'G-Sides' album.

ABOVE
'Our plane was out of action, so we hired this heap of crap. I'm amazed we got there'
MURDOC NICCALS

Rolling Stone, who had been continually supportive of Gorillaz, gave the record an excellent review. 'A band whose debut conjured a fantasyland of hip hop and punk, ambient dub and dark electronica ... each of the nine (G-sides) tracks exhibits that Gorillaz irreverence and typically taut sense of rhythm. The standout is the rumbling "Ghost Train" in which 2D plays a testifying preacher as a choir and buzzy analogue synths pound behind him. The animated outfit fashions words of praise and ecstasy into a delirious gospel throwdown, a collision between a carload of still-buzzing ravers and a bus packed with hymn-singing believers.'

Gorillaz were thrilled and excited to be entering America and breaking new ground. Murdoc was rubbing his hands together on the plane over. *'I'm gonna enjoy this! Hamburgerland, here I come!'* Other than Russel, the members had never been to the States.

Or so most of the band thought. Murdoc was arrested immediately the band landed due to an incident in Buffalo County, Nebraska, some 15 years previously. As the Gorillaz touched down, Murdoc was nicked and held in police custody for 24 hours. He was only released upon the presentation of a security bail set at 500,000 US dollars. He made the first concert with seconds to spare, but it was a shaky start to the tour ...

Russel: You must have done something pretty serious.

Murdoc: Not really. It was something to do with some soil and livestock I ... er ... forgot to declare. And it was only a little gun. Which I was holding for someone else anyway.

This minor burp overcome, Gorillaz enjoyed a passionate, if diverse, response. If the success they had witnessed in the UK had been impressive, the reception they received in America was overwhelming, dwarfing all pre-conceptions.

Murdoc: We gave them something they'd never seen before.

Russel: We hit that place like a hurricane. The early dates of the tour took a little while to get right, but when it did it hit really hard.

February 23rd 2002 *Toronto Docks, Canada*

Russel: The opening night in Toronto was pretty hairy. We had a new set of visuals that had been updated again from the British Tour, so the soundcheck was spent checking out whether these were gonna work or not. The company that worked on our stage set, Wildcat, had gone out of their way to re-configure the visuals since the last gigs.

At this stage on the first night everyone was unsure as to whether Murdoc would be released in time to play, but as Gorillaz stood to lose a career-killing amount of cash the concerts had to go ahead one way or another.

Russel: Even up to the soundcheck there was the belief that Murdoc wasn't gonna rejoin the tour so we'd spent all night training up a stand-up . . . sorry, 'stand in' bass player; a brilliant musician of some repute by the name of Roberto Occhipinti. He had the skill and tenacity to learn the whole of the album in one night, with a little last-minute notational aid from one of the crew. However, in the end Murdoc turned up and stared at Roberto with a kind of –

Murdoc: 'Who the bloody hell are you?' type expression. Sorry chum, that's my spot. Sling your hook. So I just flung on the bass, adjusted my strap and away we went.

Acclimatising to the new visuals, hired equipment and the monitor problems, culminated in Gorillaz under-performing on the opening night of the tour. More importantly, the concept of Gorillaz playing behind a screen was an issue that dramatically divided the audience's opinion. While some admired the creative ambition and bold artistic statement, others felt simply that it let the fans down, and led to an inability to connect with the crowd. Much of the audience felt deflated by the lack of genuine band presence.

Noodle: When the stage lighting was properly positioned and the shadows were thrown in the correct way, the effect worked very well. It was possible to see both the projected animations and experience the work of the live Gorillaz band combined. When the effect didn't work it meant that neither aspect was experienced properly. And there was a disconnection between ourselves and the audience members. It was difficult for us to realise that at the time, as we were playing from behind the screen, and couldn't see the audience.

2D: I think you may have just explained the problem.

Noodle: Yes, but we did judge the reaction on hearing the cheering from the audience, and that seemed very loud and very approving.

Murdoc: Er . . . that might have been my fault. I made a tape of crowd-cheering which I played through the P.A. To get us in the mood, like.

Gorillaz also did themselves no favours with their refusal to perform an encore that evening. A website set up to gauge the reaction of the Gorillaz' audience received many posts from disgruntled followers, who as fans of the album and the videos felt that the live show was too removed and possibly even ridiculing their own audience.

'I love every ounce of the record produced by this unique and talented group of artists. But they overstepped their boundaries in thinking a 'live' tour could back their studio and MTV2 acclaim. And as for musical legitimacy, they lost it when they robbed the crowd of what every fan deserves – a real encore.'

A review two days later in the Toronto Star re-iterated this sense of disappointment. The headline for the February 25th 2002 edition read: '"Virtual band" an interesting failure.'

The review went on to comment, 'Snide send-ups of prefab-pop rip-offs should not become snide prefab-pop rip-offs in themselves, and that's exactly what this felt like ... Unable to feed off the crowd's energy (which was generally negative, anyway) from behind the screen, the band provided nothing in the way of spontaneity or pacing, and when the set ... petered out suddenly at the 60-minute mark with no room for an encore, there was a palpable sense of incredulous anger in the room.'

Murdoc: Incredulous anger? Wow! What next, 'poncey journo incandescent with rage and fury at scandalous waste of tax-payer's money on virtual experiment'? Not interested, sonny.

2D: For a moment we thought the screen might have been a mistake. You could only really see my silhouette. And maybe it wasn't enough for some people.

Murdoc: Oh well. The Toronto Star can just shut its face. Behind the screen we were giving it 200% and we were sounding dangerous. And anyway it was opening night, there's always gonna be issues. We were going down a storm within three nights. So stick that in your letters page.

For Russel this was a reconnection with his homeland.

Russel: Yeah, it felt like coming home. The land that bred me has proved to be among the most receptive to Gorillaz. In some ways I feel that this is a stepping stone to even greater things. In the same way Muhammad Ali used boxing to draw attention to his message, I feel Gorillaz' success has given me the power to communicate positive beats, a life-affirming love and some excellent hip hop props to the world. The beat goes on and just keeps growing.

Just like the man himself.

On the second night in Boston, Gorillaz extended their soundcheck to work out any gremlins that'd appeared in their stageshow in Toronto. The concert that night was a marked improvement and the band were back in the saddle.

Murdoc naturally took to his overnight superstardom like a fish to drink and dived right in. However, not even the best of bands can sidestep the practicalities of being on the road.

The post-gig tour bus was an unavoidable trial of fire. Despite the fact that the tour bus they took charge of was a 220ft 'Silver Surfer', the titanium-based high end of the new superleague of coaches, it wasn't enough. Predictably the interior degenerated into what looked like the aftermath of a borstal kid's party in the space of five seconds.

Noodle: The inside of tour buses can become the most disgusting places on earth. They all end up looking like Mr Peter Doherty's bedroom.

Murdoc: You're right, Nood. I mean, it's amazing: no matter how carefully you try and eat it, food purchased at a garage will just destroy the inside of your bus within 30 seconds. Not only that, even if you're starving, after two mouthfuls you put it on the side for later. Inevitably it turns up a week later inside someone's bunk or underneath a load of magazines. It's like travelling around the world in a wheelie bin.

Russel: No matter how hard you try, how many rules you set, the bus becomes the inside of a frat house within minutes. We may as well have got John Belushi to drive the coach.

The tour bus was soon christened The Charon; named after the boatman of Greek mythology who ferried the dead to Hades.

2D: Also, Murdoc always acts like such a dick. Every bus we go in, he goes over to the microwave and pops an egg in there when no one's looking. Two minutes later 'Pfffffffhhh!!!' The egg's exploded everywhere. Murdoc always acts like he

knows nothing about it. So annoying. And when you accuse him, he ignores you or acts all indignant.

Murdoc (snootily): I have never put an egg in a microwave.

Noodle: You lie.

There is also the issue of fragrance. With the best will in the world, flatulence is a recurrent problem, when faced with fast food and hours of mobile incarceration.

Noodle: It can be a truly unpleasant existence.

2D: Shut up, Noodle. You're the worst!

Irrespective of these initial setbacks, Gorillaz were clearly having the time of their lives. By the third night, Gorillaz were on top form, the issue with the screens had been resolved and the reaction from the audiences was far, far better.

Murdoc: Yeah baby! Live is where it's at!! Ahh . . . The smell of the crowd, I love it! 50,000 kids going crazy, me up on stage, foot on the monitor, bass thumping away. Unbelievable!! When I die, I wanna come back as me and do the whole thing all over again.

The post-gig tour bus became a rolling stereo on wheels; thick, dense reggae cut a subsonic trail through the night-time deserts of America, while the passengers relished the novelty of their inaugural Stateside visit.

BELOW
The interior of Gorillaz' tour bus
'Ship of fools'
MURDOC NICCALS

Murdoc: I brought a load of my favourite books with me too: Bulgakov's 'Master and Margarita', Goethe's 'Faust', Klaus Mann's 'Mephisto', 'The Lesser Key of Solomon' a bunch of the Marquis de Sade's stuff, a copy of 'I, Lucifer', Suskind's 'Perfume' – Great!! Cracking stuff. Sure beats cocking about on the PlayStation.

Inter-band arguments still naturally broke out. On one journey, the bus was pulled over after the stereo was thrown out through the roof skylight, crashing down onto the highway.

Murdoc: I said if 2D played that Ricky Martin tune one more time, the music was going off. Which it did.

As the tour progressed and Gorillaz eased their way into their new 'A' list status, the pace of celebrations escalated. Murdoc's hotel room was usually the venue for the post-gig bouts of Bacchanalia. His suite, resembling a cross between a Russ Meyer film and a Marx Brothers sketch, blasted out music till the early hours.

With the heady energies of the concert and the wild, abandoned on-tour atmosphere, Murdoc's Wicca ceremonies became more frequent. The rider had gone from '48 cans of strong continental beer plus an assortment of sandwiches', to now including demands for items such as 'smoked hemp, spider's liver, juniper berries, goat's shit, hemlock, powdered snake bone' plus 'bunches of lavender, nettles and yarrow stalks . . .'

These were accompanied by the usual array of potato-based elixirs.

The tour rumbled on and Gorillaz noted an increased respect from other artists in the industry. A chance meeting in a lobby ended with Gorillaz being invited to a concert and post-gig tear-up with hip hop headcases The Wu Tang Clan.

BELOW
The Black-Skinned Demon Boy
'Nice going, Murdoc'
RUSSEL HOBBS

Russel: Yeah, that was good. Things like that just bring it all back home for me. These were artists that I had a great respect from. They saw my laminate in the bar, clocked I was from Gorillaz and we took it from there. There was even talk at the time about a possible hook-up with the Wu's on record. I don't know why we never chased that one up.

Gorillaz were riding high on a tidal wave of hysteria; a crimson crescendo of chaos. The concerts were met with increasing enthusiasm, but the unbridled extra-curricular hedonism began inviting far darker clouds.

Russel: Murdoc skilfully managed to allow a demon entity to enter this world. Thoughtless. By performing his half-baked Satanic rituals when he'd been hitting the bottle, he just became careless. Left his book open, didn't quite finish off whatever incantation he was meant to be performing, knocking candles over . . . and this 'thing', a black-skinned demon boy, just crawled out the middle of his salty pentagram. A spirit of a malevolent child devil. This caused us no end of problems.

Housemaids complained continually about having to scrape off waxy pentacles from the bedroom carpets.

Murdoc: She shouldn't have come in. I'd left the 'Already Disturbed' sign diligently on the door handle every night, but still at 7:30am like cancerous clockwork it came, 'Heeeeloo Housekeeping.'

GO. A. WAAAAAAAAAAAAAYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY!!!!!!!!

Due to Murdoc's endless post-gig portal-opening antics, Gorillaz' on-the-road catering crew now had to provide meals for moody sprites, knackered fauns and numerous hungover satyrs. This created a fair amount of resentment from the tour manager, Colonel Duffy, a man whose limited time was already heavily leant upon.

Noodle had now become a virtual recluse, walling herself up in her room at the hotel, or choosing to remain in her bunk when the band travelled by bus. The other members of the band put it down to a combination of her young age and road fatigue. The truth is that Noodle, suffering in silence, was experiencing odd flashbacks, snapshots of her forgotten past. It would seem that her suppressed memories were beginning to erupt from her subconscious.

She did receive a certain amount of solace from Gorillaz' bodyguard, a seven-foot circus sideshow, named 'Nature'. This kind-hearted, goggled-eyed ginger monstrosity was another one of the Gorillaz crew who was constantly put upon to protect Murdoc, and all, from the most mundane and self-induced kind of trauma. If rock and roll had an honours system this man would be a lolloping hunchback of medals.

However, even the most loyal of soldiers has a limit.

Colonel Duffy quit after knocking on Murdoc's door for a wake-up call only to be greeted by a naked griffin.

Murdoc: Being a band on the road is . . . like being in a bubble, y'know? It's impossible to know what's really going on after a while. You just end up, kind of, gathering people in your wake. Like when we were in America there was this clown, right, full costume, big red shoes and everything, who seemed to be with us the whole time. He was on our bus every night, really drunk, picking fights, falling asleep in the aisle, cigar burns everywhere. Everyone thought he was a guest of someone else. Turned out no one knew who the hell this bloke was.

Russel: It was the music that kept us together at this stage. Murdoc's one-man roadshow was beginning to grate on both the band and crew alike. Noodle was taking it particularly badly. It was difficult. This was when the Gorillaz band really started to pull in separate directions. I think the four members were unsure of each other's motivations and intentions. It led to a sense of distrust and maybe even resentment, I guess.

February 28th 2002 *New York Hammerstein Ballroom, USA*

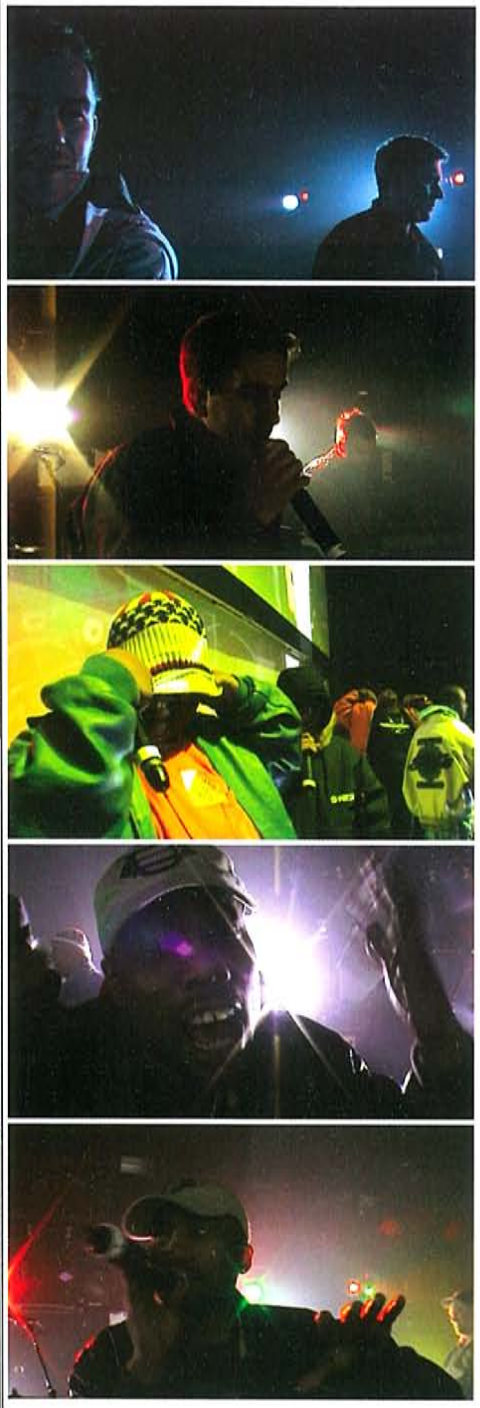
As Murdoc had pointed out, within days of the Toronto concert, the onstage hitches experienced at the beginning of the tour had now ironed themselves out completely. In New York, Gorillaz were joined on stage by both Terry Hall and D12 for the rendition of '911'. An event that brought the house down.

Russel: That was a career high for me. I'm playing back at my NYC hometown, with D12 and the singer of the Specials. That's when you know that it's all worth it. Even if you do have Caligula on bass.

The website reviews were far more generous this time: 'Wow. Seeing Gorillaz has spoiled the rest of my life. I don't think I will ever see anything better than what I witnessed at the Hammerstein Ballroom.'

March 8th 2002 *Los Angeles Palladium, USA*

March 9th 2002 *Los Angeles Palladium, USA*



ABOVE
New York, NY, Hammerstein Ballroom, 2002 with guests

Russel: I remember the first LA show being a bit flat. We did two shows in LA and I think on the first night, because the security lights were up the room was almost too bright for the visuals to really work. When it wasn't dark the visuals just didn't kick in enough. But the second night was great.

At the second gig in LA the band were graced with the presence of a duet of Hollywood 'A' listers in the comely forms of Drew Barrymore and Cameron Diaz. Murdoc was unsurprised by their appearance.

Murdoc: Of course they were gonna turn up at the gig. I'd left a little trail of bread crumbs leading from their doorsteps all the way to the venue. Which of course I re-traced straight after the concert. Oh yes.

Murdoc blew his lothario act with a little jumble-sale of facts that he delivered to Ms Diaz, a post-concert sweat still visible on his green-hued brow.

Murdoc: Oh, for love of sweet Satan! Don't wheel this old chestnut out again.

2D: What did you say to her? Oh yes: 'So Ms Diaz. You were fantastic in, er . . . "The Mexican".' She was never in that film. Me and Russ were just watching and laughing from the opposite table, as Murdoc tried to work his 'magic'.

To her credit she never corrected the odorous, slimy bass player. Festivities continued for a crew of revellers back at Chez Niccals, resulting in the bass-player missing the tour bus which left for Mexico the following day. As the Gorillaz wagon rolled out to a gig that would signify a great change for the band, Murdoc was still finishing a really long sentence.

Russel: Mexico was always gonna be heavy. Murdoc by now was an entirely different entity, staying up night after night talking to these . . . 'sprites' he'd conjured up.

Mexico: The End of the Road

February 25th 2002 *'Tomorrow Comes Today' re-released hitting Number 33 in the UK charts*

In the updated biography issued with the single, Murdoc had made a passing comment about now being 'Bigger than Satan', flippantly suggesting 'I might try and get him to do a guest vocal on my solo album'.

The release smacked of arrogance, and possibly even a two-fingered salute to the man Murdoc had originally struck a deal with years before.

This throwaway declaration cast a shadowy hex upon Gorillaz.

March 11th 2002 *Palacio de los Deportes, Mexico City, Mexico*

By the time the Gorillaz stage show rolled into Mexico, tempers were frayed,

energy low and brains all round generally frazzled. The air was volatile to say the least. What was originally meant to be a celebratory festival, swiftly tacked on last minute to the end of the tour, quickly descended into disaster.

The soundcheck was slow with desks malfunctioning and multiple monitor problems.

Russel: 50 million pounds of high-end equipment but no one had anticipated the switch in voltage levels. In the end we had to send a runner out to buy us a plug adaptor from Duane Reade.

Murdoc, having been helicoptered in, was swanning around like Elizabeth Taylor, demanding an endless flow of chilled cigarettes and monogrammed ice. But not even the most pampered diva can be shielded from every random occurrence.

Murdoc: At the venue, right, I was standing at the bar, when someone dropped a fag butt in this giffer's beer. The prat swallowed the fag and puked it up all over the back of my neck. So I was covered in sick before we even went on.

The road crew were working round the clock to make the event happen, but Murdoc was more concerned with making sure that Dopey Joe, the band's 'Mexican Vibemeister', had the correct laminated pass, ensuring his unrestricted access to Murdoc's inner, inner, inner sanctum. The backstage area was by now a veritable Russian doll of elitism.

Over 60,000 people attended the event, far more than anticipated, and the heat that day had risen to sweltering levels.

On a whim, Murdoc decided last minute to sack all the hired security and get Evel Knievel's nephew's motorcycle club to police the event.

Murdoc: Hey! What's wrong with that? Get them doing jumps and stuff. Keep the crowd happy, yeah?

Noodle had been experiencing nightmares repeatedly, and hadn't slept for days. Her temper was on a hair trigger. The band went on two hours late, further heightening tensions. 2D had eaten a dodgy burrito the night before, leaving him chained to the crapper for hours.

Support act Thor did their best to entertain the audience with their riveting 'blowing up a hot water bottle' act, but there's only so many times you can watch that.

Murdoc: Who booked them? They were shit.

2D: You did. They're mates of yours.

Right. Finally the lights went down and to a roar of anticipation our stars took to the stage. Feverish expectations had been heightened further by the decision to remove the screens that had obscured the crowd's vision of the band.

Murdoc: The air was so alive with tension, the heavy electricity of the moment, well, it was enough to make your hair stand on end. It looked like it was gonna be a corker. We opened up with 'M1 A1' as per usual and the gig got off to a flying start.

However, problems littered the gig, and when one over-enthusiastic fan jumped up on stage, Murdoc belted him round the head with his bass. The fan was stretchered off, the words 'Flying V' forever imprinted on his neck.

Murdoc: I didn't miss a note, though, did I?

Russel collapsed mid-song, requiring an oxygen mask to bring him round. After a blast in the calves of super-strength

vitamin injections, he re-took his seat behind the kit. But the delays and hold-ups were making people restless.

Fights broke out between some audience members, while other sections at the front were in danger of being crushed as the crowd surged forward.

Midway through 'Man Research', the gig ground to halt when one of Siegfried and Roy's circus tigers, a guest at the event, staggered out from the VIP area fuelled on an over-indulgence of complimentary drinks. Drunk and lairy, the tiger became embroiled in a slagging match with one of the bikers. The violence escalated when the beast repeatedly tried to mount the biker's Chopper and make off, invoking wrath from the owner. *'Go on, mate. Givvus a go.'* Murdoc, for once the diplomat, implored calm from the audience, issuing an ultimatum from the stage.

Murdoc: Look, if that cat doesn't cool it, we're not playing.

Things seemed to settle back down for a period and the band started up again going into a chilled-out reggae version of 'Slow Country'. However, the trouble soon erupted again when someone chucked a lung up onto the stage.

2D: It was a horse's lung, which kind of indicated that someone had brought it with them to the place on purpose.

The band made one final attempt to play on, but after a particularly forceful surge forward from the crowd rocked the hastily built stage, a section of the stage set toppled down on to the audience.

Consequently, several members of the audience were crushed beneath one of the giant inflatable well-titted gorillas from the 'Rock the House' video, a prop that now formed part of the Gorillaz indulgent live show.

The gig was pulled but the lack of any genuinely qualified security meant that the kids were trapped underneath this humiliating contraption for forty-eight hours before the fire service could deflate the massive gibbon prop enough to free the victims.

Russel: We actually managed to keep this quiet somehow, which is surprising considering how many people attended that gig.

To make matters worse, while 2D stood pensive and concerned by the events unfolding before him, Murdoc was seen quite visibly giggling at the predicament of his own fans.

The Mexico City concert ended in carnage, signalling the end of an unbroken season of fortune for the band and sparking off a period that would bring Gorillaz to their knees.

Gorillaz were meant to be a break from the past, a fresh new voice heralding a limitless creative dawn. Now they just looked like just another bunch of self-obsessed rockstars with too much dough and a terminal lack of direction. The distance between them and their audience had visually grown.

Murdoc (ominously): Yeah. This is when our run of luck ended for a while. Everything had been pretty two-dimensional in our lives up until now, but things became a lot darker after this point . . .

Hollywood and Bust

'You know wot? There's no business like show business' 2D

With the American tour behind them and offers of film deals falling out their collective arse, Gorillaz de-camped to LA for a six-month descent into darkness and screen tests that stretched the band's patience to breaking point. Inhabiting a rented house high up in the Hollywood Hills, things soon went from bad to weird.

Murdoc: I got the hint from the gig down in Mexico. It was maybe time to chill out, knock the Ouija board stuff on the head, and maybe take a couple weeks out to just kick back and enjoy the fruits of our labours. We'd been going at it pretty hard for maybe four years non-stop. I also got the impression if we didn't re-group maybe either Noodle or Russel would quit.

March 13th 2002 *Gorillaz move into 125 Mulholland Drive*

Murdoc: Apparently Mulholland Drive is 50 miles long in total. I bet you their postman is knackered by the end of that shift.

Russel: I was unsure about this whole move from the beginning. The American tour was originally planned to be a three-week expedition to bring our sound to the people Stateside. Then we were gonna get back to Kong and lay down some new music. Now we're living in a house in Hollywood, looking at film scripts. I mean, this didn't really feel like the right step for Gorillaz to make.

Murdoc: I bunged a load of the dough we made from the tour down on the house. I thought, you know, 'party time'! Let's just sit by the pool, plan our next move and see what some of these film cats have got to say for themselves.

2D: I never realised we were gonna be away that long. I don't even remember locking our studio up properly. Three weeks is one thing, but a couple of years?

The giddy excitement of being feted by the LA glitterati certainly gave a brief if shallow extra sparkle to Gorillaz' world. However, not all of Gorillaz were convinced by their new close family of friends.

DEATH
FROM
BELOW
CHOOSE
PAZUZU
REJECT FALSE ICO

Noodle: I was aware of what these people were up to. They are transparent. They treat us like a gimmick, something that could be pulled out at parties to show how smart they are. I did not like this. There is something rotten in the state of Los Angeles. The city of angels has a dark underbelly.

Murdoc: I can't see what the problem was. We had great weather. I even got a bit of a tan, which made me look a bit weird actually. I went a kind of . . . dark green colour. But it was all good. I bought an old motorbike, which I was using to get around; an old 1960s Triumph 650. Actually I spent most mornings on it trying to jump over our neighbour's garden, but I never made it. I came crashing down into his pool every time.

Russel: I think Mr Nicholson got very bored of your little stunt very quickly. He said he was gonna have you shot at one point.

Murdoc: At least I waved every time I did it. Manners, eh? Very important.

Murdoc fell in love with Hollywood Town, and like every sucker that had been before him, thought it'd fallen in love with him. Murdoc 'I'm Gorillaz' Niccals ran his mouth off at every opportunity, bragging about the fascinating combination of talent, DNA, divine birthright and a crystal ball-like career clairvoyance he possessed.

Murdoc: I was just trying to get the film made. Otherwise there's no way I'd have thrown that many parties. No way.

2D still seemed like a sixth form student at his parents' gathering, hanging back by the walls, but many a Mrs Robinson queued up to tickle the young boy's fancy. *'Oi! Fack Owrf! Ow! Get off . . . Oh yeah ok!'*

At first it seemed fun; 2D talking art with Stallone, Noodle power-lunching with the midget who played Yoda. Naturally, being wined and dined by the Hollywood bigwigs suited Murdoc down to the ground. He was sure that this move was the start of his ascent into showbusiness royalty. He even started smoking big Havana cigars like a tosser.

Murdoc: Oh, yeah. I didn't really expect anything less. See there's so many musicians that think, 'I've cracked music because I'm a star. I can do anything.' No love, I, *Murdoc Niccals*, can do anything. The big screen definitely beckoned me. It was obvious; Me, Jagger, Bowie, Elvis . . . we all made the leap and still retained credible music careers afterwards.

Russel: I felt we were only just starting to make headway with the music. We'd done one album, and it was good – great, even – but we had so much more to prove. I thought this whole Hollywood thing was going to turn bad pretty quickly. Which it did.

As the unread scripts piled up and the paunches began to kick in, the night-time activities soon outweighed the day jobs. This peculiar limbo-like existence was hard to tolerate for a group as accustomed to high-speed action as Gorillaz.

Noodle: I had been quite confused for a long time. About my past, the nightmares I was having . . . I was unsure whether I was still doing the right thing. The feelings were even greater after what had happened in Mexico. Strange images flashed in my head.

Russel: I'd made a condition that if we agreed to do the film, that Gorillaz do the soundtrack. That was something that interested me and that way it was a deal for all of us.

Murdoc meanwhile was trying to hold some business meetings over at the, er . . . Playboy Mansions.

Murdoc: A lot of very important people hang out there. Otherwise I'd never have gone there. No way. But it's a difficult place to leave, Hugh Hef's House. Try saying that after 20 Singapore Slings. The cab driver never understood where the hell

I was. 'I sshaad I'm Aat HOOOOU HEFFFZZ HOOWSE. CAAHM AND GETTT MEE NOW'. That's why I could never leave that place. Poor communication.

Eventually he managed to exit the building via a slightly different route after being booted out of the Playboy Mansion for nicking ashtrays.

Murdoc: I tried to explain to the steroid-gobbling ape that tugged me. I was going to send one of the ashtray's to my brother Hannibal. He collects crap like that, for his cell. It wasn't for me. Anyway, they lobbed me out of the building and I had to walk miles back to the hotel. Which was a bit embarrassing as I was dressed as a Rhino that night. It was a fancy dress party. Though before I got flung out I did meet this lovely girl there. She had long bleached blonde hair and a fake chest.

2D: Oh, yeah. I know the one.

Murdoc: Looked a bit like Courtney Love. If you squinted. I spent a couple of days with her. Lovely girl. Very strong shoulders, I remember; good with a hod.

2D: What happened to her?

Murdoc: Oh, I don't know. She got in a mood with me about something, so I thought, 'Too much tension, baby. I'm going to get in my buggy and scoot'. Something had got her riled up, but I thought we'd left on a good note. The last thing I remember was her waving goodbye to me. She did have a gun in her hand, though, but I thought everything was cool.

News of Gorillaz presence in Hollywood spread fast.

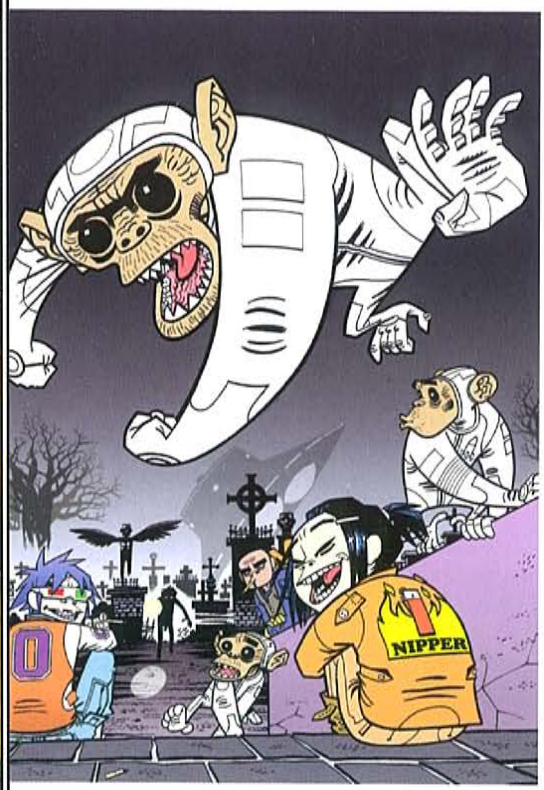
2D: I mean, we tried to keep a reasonably low profile, but we're Gorillaz. Quite popular in America.

Murdoc: Yeah, plus the fact that you're a 6ft 2 cartoon with spiky blue hair and no eyeballs. Practically invisible, right?

Soon every crank and crony from Longbeach to Burbank began using the Gorillaz' new pad as some kind of black-magic flophouse. Pill-popping starlets and sandal-wearing nob jockeys all came to 'hang' with the Gorillaz. This threw the animated four piece right off their game.

One particular guest, a small Jesus-bearded fellow by the name of Wee Jimmy Manson, took a disconcerting shine to Gorillaz. He would turn up repeatedly at every gathering,

ABOVE
Scenes from abandoned films 'Celebrity Harvest', 'Come Back With That Apple Pie' and 'I Don't Like The Smell Of That, Amigo'



ABOVE
Space Monkeyz
'Three rabid, ravenous chimps'
MURDOC NICCALS

and stayed for days on end. It was almost like he was observing, studying Gorillaz, and in particular Murdoc. However, despite his miniature 3ft size and terrible dress sense he did have an unsettling charisma about him. The fact that he also brought with him a gaggle of female sycophants led Murdoc to drop his guard.

Murdoc: Wee Jimmy Manson? Oh, he's alright. As long as he doesn't play that stupid acoustic guitar of his. His wonky hippie songs do my head right in. It's times like that you pray for tinnitus.

However, this little man with his creepy family of followers sent a shudder through Russel's soul.

Russel: His eyes just darted around the place the whole time. He was up to something for sure. It was almost like you could hear the broken carousel going round in his head.

As time moved on the other members of Gorillaz began to put pressure on Murdoc to make a decision.

Russel: We'd been there three months now, and nothing had been done. No choices made, not a single scene shot.

Eventually during a game of 'pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey' a director for the Gorillaz movie was chosen and filming began almost immediately.

June 23rd 2002 *Gorillaz commence filming on 'Whoops! There Goes My Career!'*

Murdoc: We'd met a bunch of directors but it was decided to go with Mr Alfred C. Klinker. He referenced all the right movies so sometimes you just go with your instinct. We started filming almost the next day. We shot a whole bunch of stuff, but it was mainly pretty shit.

Russel: Klinker sold it to us like we were making an animated-action-drama-thriller-horror-comedy. I mean, I'm into mixing my genres, as you can hear on our records, but this didn't add up.

2D: He never gave us a script. He said he was using the Mike Leigh method. He would tell us what to do and, as we were in character, we'd react naturally. That was just his way of working.

Noodle: This man was not telling the truth. I think he was making it up as he went along.

On a daily basis the whole theme of the movie seemed to change, usually according to the last film Klinker had hired out from the video store.

Murdoc: One day we were making 'Where Eagles Dare' meets 'Animal House', next minute it's an underwater musical. Two minutes later you're in make-up being made up to look like a . . . talking drink.

Russel: I mean, there's me and Murdoc both in chicken suits doing a Gorillaz remake of Richard Prior and Gene Wilder's comedy 'Stir Crazy'. Insane, but you just kinda get –

Murdoc: Roped into these things. You go with the flow after a while, safe in the knowledge that the director has a clear and focused vision.

2D: I forgot my costume one day and was made to film a whole scene in my pants and vest as punishment.

Russel: We trained hard for the film. We didn't want to seem like the clichéd musician turned actors so we were all taking it pretty seriously. D was having extensive vocal coaching to give him a big screen accent.

2D: At one point it was suggested that Mel Gibson should do my voice, but I thought I should do it. I sound more like me.

Noodle: I had been practicing my Samurai Sword fighting skills daily. I can now battle all creatures using just intuition. Even when blindfolded.

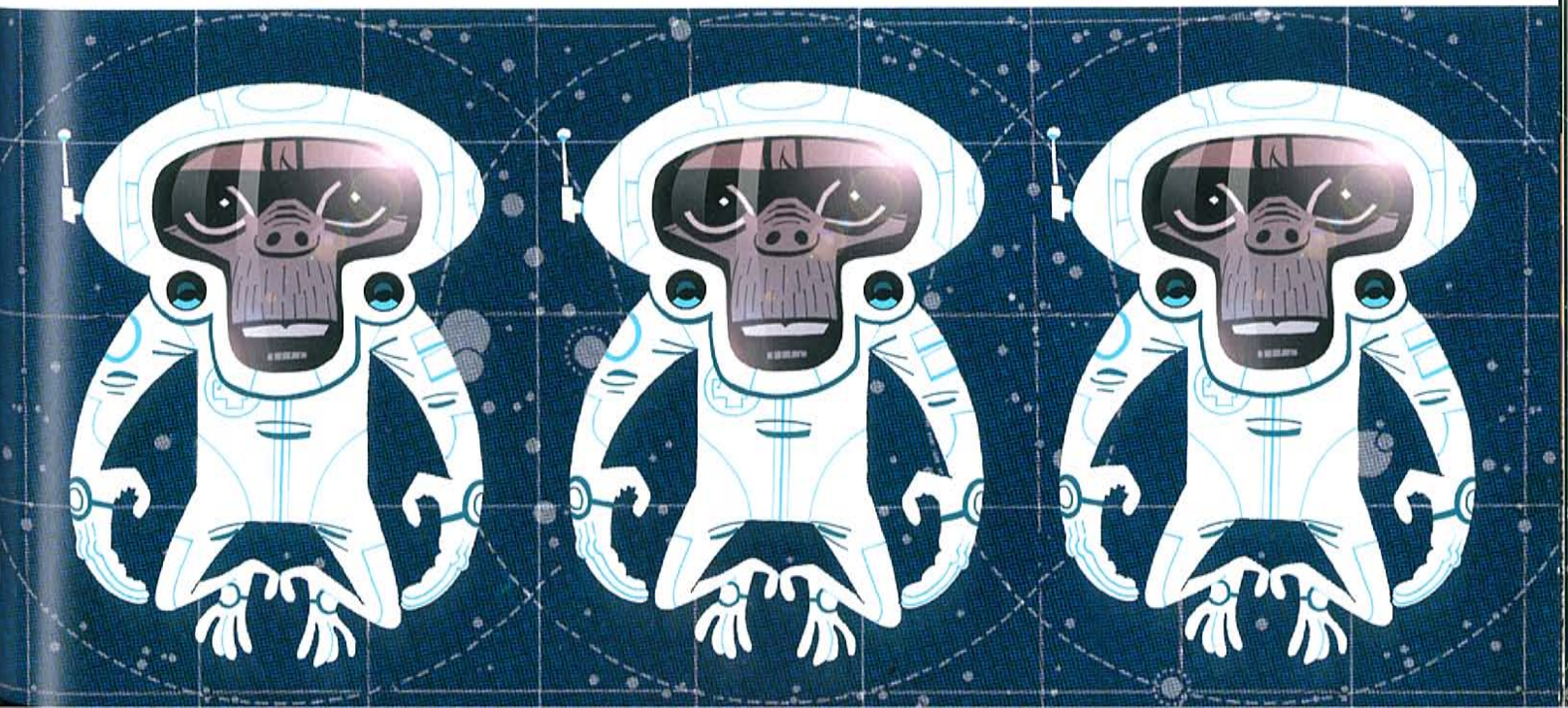
The work schedule was intense, but Gorillaz ploughed on under the misguided belief that Klinker, once he had all the footage in the can, was going to assemble a work of true genius.

Russel: I think we left LA only once during that whole period. We were invited to go and play the Isle of MTV festival over in Lisbon. It felt good to go play after all the film business. A real relief.

July 20th 2002 *Gorillaz play Isle of MTV festival, Portugal*

The event was hosted by R&B queen and US style icon Kelis and DJ / Producer Roger Sanchez. The line up included live performances from both Gorillaz and Morcheeba.

Murdoc's head was brought out of the clouds briefly by an incident backstage in which a fan handed Murdoc a record to sign, a release which to his surprise he didn't recognise. It transpired that a trio of simian-based marauders, the Spacemonkeyz, had put this record together themselves. Having left the studio unlocked as 2D had suspected, the three cosmic monkeys had waltzed into Kong Studios several months previously and stolen the master tapes to the Gorillaz album.



WANTED

THE SPACE MONKEYS

Three unusual primates have arrived on Planet Earth. They are the second-generation mutated offspring of the monkey cosmonauts sent into space during the Cold War of the fifties and sixties. For forty years they have been on an interplanetary tour of the universe searching for their spiritual leader "Laika," the first dog in space. During this time they have managed to acquire a massive amount of devastating musical technology. In an attempt to publicise their cause these mutant chimps have touched down on this planet to infiltrate, agitate and organize. They are considered armed and dangerous. Any sightings should be reported immediately to the Gorillaz.

D-ZIRE
"See no evil"

Age: Unknown
Blood group: Rhesus Positive
Natural Climate: "A Moist Studio in Jamaica"

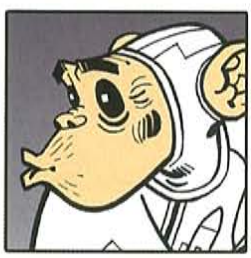
Having been schooled on the mother ship, D-Zire prefers his beats to land on the 1. An elusive ape, he is currently on the IGSPVC's (Inter Galactic Society for the Prevention of Vinyl Cruelty) most wanted list. Keep your fingers outside the cage - when he ain't scratchin', this monkey bites!
Lee Scratch Perry allegedly burnt his "Black Arc" studio down when he heard the work of this chimp.

DUBERSIVE
"Hear no evil"

Age "20 summingk"
Height: 3ft 9
Habits: Likes Red Wine

Shuffles on a 2 and a 4. This monkey springs into action when the warning lights glow red. He has a thorough grounding in cosmic patterns and codes and is not afraid to display his huge bottom end. Overly fond of absinthe. Lost his UFO license for over-driving desks into "oblivion and beyond".

Dubversive is rumoured to be dating Natalie Imbruglia. Possibly, "The Weakest Link". Spends most of his free time in front of his bank of TVs watching re-runs, his latest Earth obsession, "TJ Hooker" of which he has been known to comment "The tension is incredible!".



GAVVA
"Speak no evil" Knievil

Age: Unknown
Weight: 6 pounds 3 ounces
Hobbies: Collecting clothes: mainly Stussy and Bathing Ape.

Gavva, a slightly mis-shapen, 40 a day type of chimp, is known to enjoy a heavier landing, and a tight-fitting space suit. Due to a faulty antenna he only receives analogue signals. He refuses to have this defect corrected! Was the first monkey to bring Gavva House to Earth, a super-speed version of jungle. Originally broad-casting his monkey-arsed s**t from a lock-up in Hackney, it initially went way above people's heads. Gavva has commented: "Yeah, but once we dumbed it down for human consumption it cleaned up". With his tendency for protracted periods of absence he's one to watch out for! Hence his nickname "The Missing Link".

Hear No Evil

The tapes were remixed by the apes and subsequently released under the title 'Laika Come Home' on June 24th 2002.

Murdoc: Apparently it was some kind of communication to the stars, an attempt by them to contact whichever stupid jungle mothership they'd been booted off.

Russel: I think what they did with the album was good. A really good take on the album we'd put out.

Murdoc: OK, but you give three monkeys a great album and an unlimited amount of computers, sooner or later they're gonna come up with a dub version of Shakespeare. Anyway, do you know how hard it is to get monkey crap out of a carpet? They ruined our studio.

The only information regarding these three thieving chimps came in the form a badly-written note left taped to the door of Kong.

Murdoc: I bet you Dr Wurzel had something to do with all this bollocks. It's got his fingerprints all over it. First my Winnebago, then my album. I'm going to knock his Adam's apple out when I catch up with him. Just watch.

Irrespective of Murdoc's annoyance the album was reviewed favourably, and added another element to Gorillaz' growing catalogue.

The July 2002 edition of Q carried a very enthusiastic assessment: *'SpaceMonkeyz take the kid-hop pick and mix of the Gorillaz album and subject it to the bass reverberation, jam-jar rattling and backwards tape babble of classic Jamaican dub. Varying levels of remix-mutation and nonsensical name-changes make for a superb companion piece to the original.'*

ABOVE
Images from Spacemonkeyz' video for the 'Lil' Dub Chefin' single

Uncut described the album as *'a novel experiment'* and went on to say that the Spacemonkeyz were *'usurping "Clint Eastwood" completely into a virtually unrecognisable "Fistful of Peanuts"'*.

The benevolent comments did nothing to pacify Murdoc's fury at having his album hijacked by a bunch of mouthy chimps. With spittle coming out the side of his sloppy gob, he added the 'Monkeyz to his ever growing shitlist. He seemed to have built up a fair few adversaries.

Hmmm ...

Fun Fact

The string arrangements on 'Laika Come Home' have been credited to a man named Brian Pisce (*pronounced 'Piss'*). He claimed to be the second cousin of the great Nelson Riddle who had arranged and conducted strings for Frank Sinatra. Brian is nothing of the sort. He is a musical conman and an all-round charlatan. His only other claimed credit was conducting the orchestra on 'Swing When You're Winning', the really good Robbie Williams album. The strings he arranged on 'Laika Come Home' were all wonky and out of tune. They sounded like a clown being sick. Hence why they were all removed from the album. Anyone who has the misfortune to run into this fool should steer well clear. He'll muck your record up and charge you the earth for it. You have been warned.

Gorillaz returned to Los Angeles to complete the filming commitments only to find that the script had again mutated. Now Klinker proposed to film Gorillaz transporting a herd of inebriated elephants across the Alps. The director pitched

his new vision as a cross between 'Hannibal Brooks' and a 'Dumbo' meets 'Barfly' collage.

Things on set took a nosedive and the band's patience grew thin. Murdoc refused to learn any more lines; Russel's weight had ballooned out of control making it difficult for him to leave his trailer. 2D lost the ability to tell film from reality and Noodle's tolerance of cigar-chomping cockwafflers had been long exhausted.

The last straw came when after three months' intensive Kayak practice, the big 'Deliverance' water ride scene got cut. It was clear that the script, if one ever existed, wasn't worked out. Gorillaz decided to blow out the movie moguls and def the film off. This left Hollywood tosspot and short-arse egomaniac director Mr Klinker fuming into his Double Grande Skinny Latte.

2D: Klinker . . . Skinbacio . . . Why are we always getting involved with these fake film directors?

Russel: When we went to watch what Klinker had shot so far, it was all blank. Reel after reel after reel. Empty. I mean, who knows what he was up to.

Murdoc, on the side, still pursued his acting ambition and, strangely enough, managed to get himself an audition in a brand new adventure series called 'Shoot to Kill'. Pitching itself as a 'psychedelic, speed-driven, rip-snorting, gun-toting 3,000 mile-an-hour biker burn up through zombiefied America', it actually looked really promising.

Murdoc: It was meant to be 'Easy Rider' meets 'Dawn of The Dead'. It looked really good, in fact. I did the audition and they made my face look a bit weird, but I thought I was perfect for the job. I tore round the set on my chopper and did the skids in all the right places. A natural.

2D: But then they decided you were too old for the part, didn't they? So they got a young buck from LA to do it. Instead of an old geezer from Stoke. Anyway, I thought we were here to do a Gorillaz movie. All of us. Together, you know?

BELOW
'Shoot To Kill', 2002, featuring Murdoc Niccals as J.T. Hennessey

Murdoc switched his tack immediately.

Murdoc: Why did we agree to do this? Whose idea was it to make this damn Gorillaz film?

Russel: Exactly! Los Angeles, Muds . . . It's an elephant's graveyard. I mean this is the city that made a remake of 'Get Carter'. We had to get out of there.

Russel was relieved that finally Murdoc had seen the light and assumed Gorillaz were about to get back on course.

Murdoc: It was clear that we were getting nowhere fast. This situation needed some drastic action, someone to take clear and decisive measures. Then it dawned on me! Of course. We're Gorillaz!! *The Gorillaz.* We know exactly what film we want to make . . . We surely should write the script ourselves!!!!

Russel's body visibly sags. The memory has knocked the wind out of him all over again.

The Film That Time Forgot

The plan was simple. Book themselves into a hotel, bring a stack of paper, a box of pencils, two crates of lager, forty packets of digestives, and a typewriter.

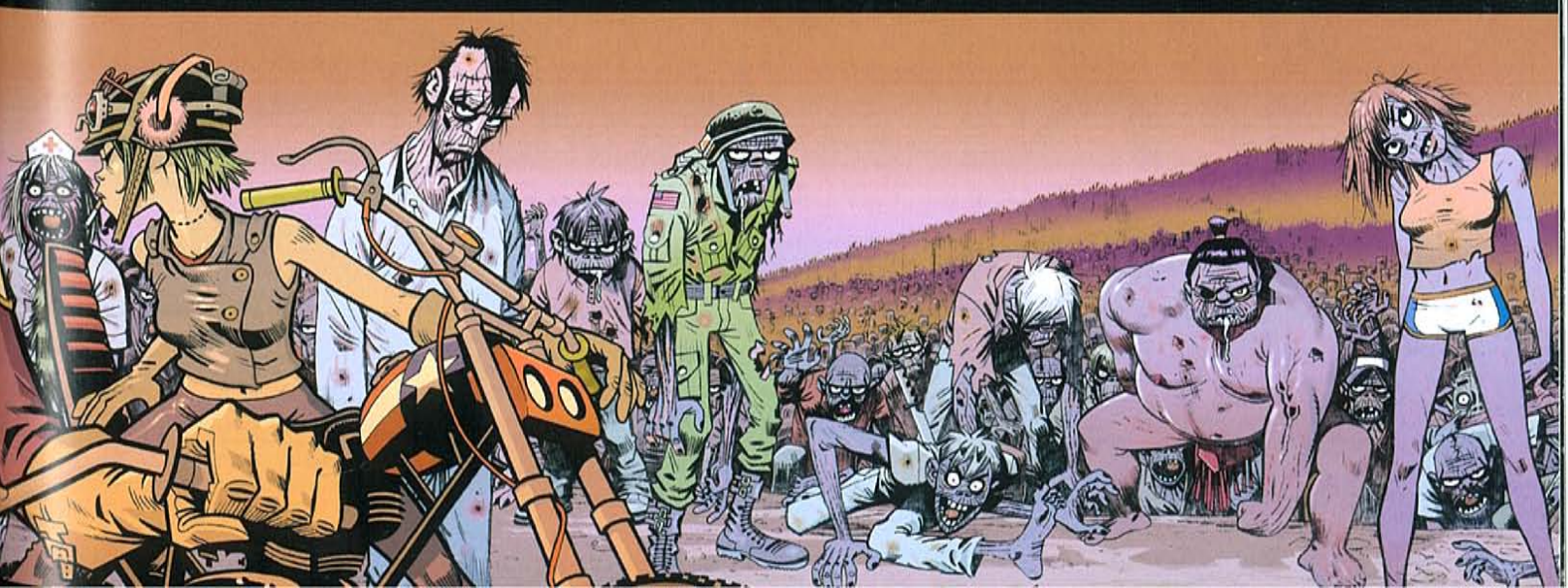
Murdoc: It was sparkly clear to me: 'We'll knock this script out in two days! We've all seen loads of films. We know what we like, so why don't we write the film ourselves? It'll be great.'

It was so obvious! The three other Gorillaz reluctantly agreed and a room was booked at the LA Sheraton.

August 15th 2002 *Gorillaz check into Room 103 at The Sheraton, Los Angeles*

Immediately really brilliant ideas began to fly round the room . . .

2D: Let's start with a car chase. It'll be about a band, no a gang . . . of spies!!



Murdoc: On the run!! No wait, we'll shoot it in Malibu. It'll be like 'Dr. No' meets 'The Last Waltz'.

They could barely contain themselves, thrilled by their own genius. Oscar-winning script-writing rockstars? These were true auteurs! They started with an excellent scene. Oh, this is so easy.

Murdoc: We'll write about what we know. That way it'll be authentic, the real essence of the characters will come out and people will know we've done our homework.

Russel's patience for this was limited at best. With heavy sarcasm he suggested a possible storyline to Murdoc.

Russel: How about this: A bullying egomaniac bass-player is convinced he can rule the world. He makes life a misery for the other members of his band with his constant narcissistic displays. Fate takes a hand, though, when he develops a disease, one that simply attacks the part of the brain that contains the ego. This is manifested by a huge boil that appears on the skull.

Murdoc mulled over the idea.

Murdoc: Hmmm . . . not bad. Then what happens?

2D: Er . . . he discovers that he's not the only one. There's thousands of the big-headed tossers falling victim to this disease all around the world. The papers are full of stories of these plague-ridden celebrity-obsessed nobs.

Murdoc: Wow! This is good. I can't believe I've just come up with an idea like this. What shall I put next?

Noodle: Maybe this. It is revealed that this disease is nature's way of getting rid of the unwanted, destructive part of society. All of the people whose ego has outgrown their talent, receive the boil; the growth is the boil on the head of humanity. It is time for it to be removed. On a certain given day all of the afflicted instinctively gather zombie-like in the middle of a stadium ground, where they are obliterated by a burning bright light that appears from the sky.

Russel: The only way to avoid this fate would be to awake from your ignorance, your over-inflated self-opinion, and realise that your talent, however great, doesn't entitle you to act like a pain in the ass continually.

Murdoc: So. Hmm. Does the central character have this revelation? Is he saved? Or not?

Russel glowered at Murdoc.

Russel: I don't know, Murdoc. You haven't written the ending yet. Does the bullying bass player have an epiphany that saves him? Or is he removed from the face of the planet with the rest of the grime? You tell me.

Murdoc: Hmmm . . . tricky. I'll come back to that bit.

However, sadly, as time went on enthusiasm waned. Holes in story lines appeared, plots unravelled like balls of wool. Ideas seemed less and less convincing and central characters simply implausible.

Hours turned into days, days rolled into weeks, the weeks turned into . . . well, you get the idea. After a month it seriously looked like they were going to kill each other. Room service no longer were willing to venture up to the suite. Piles of plates, bottles and cups lay stacked outside the door. Ashtrays were full, the curtains were drawn and the sheets hadn't been changed in weeks.

Murdoc had plopped the 'Go away. Door is electrified. Room contains Lions' sign on to the door handle weeks ago.

ABOVE
'Script writing can be a very intense business'
NOODLE

Rumours abounded of the strange goings on in room 103; the endless click-clacking of the typewriter, the dislocated moans of people on the point of breakdown. Meanwhile inside the smoky den 2D was still a bottomless pit of story lines.

2D: I've got a good idea. Here's one. OK. It's a film. It's set in a beach town in America and unknown to the local residents and tourists there's a giant killer shark lurking in the waters.

Murdoc shot 2D a murderous stare, quite clearly on the brink of violence.

Murdoc: That's actually 'Jaws', you useless goon.

2D: Well, I've got one other.

Murdoc (exhausted): Don't go into the whole thing. Just gimme the 'Elevator Pitch'.

2D's face lit up.

2D: Oh, OK. How about this? This is good. It's about four people stuck in an elevator and they can't leave until they come up with a good story for a film. It's called 'Elevator Pitch'. We could get Colin Farrell to play you.

Murdoc finally snapped.

Murdoc: AAAAARRRRRRRRGGGGGGGHHHHH!!!!!!! What the hell are we doing? We're musicians. Not scriptwriters. This is a joke!

2D: Well, it doesn't have to be Colin Farrell. We could ask Jack Black.

Murdoc exploded, lunging at 2D. Grabbing his twig-like throat with both hands he began throttling the hapless singer, squeezing the very life out of him. Russel stood up, raising himself to his full height.

Russel: Put him down, Muds. Now.

Murdoc, oblivious to the potential danger of a riled-up Russel Hobbs, continued his vicious and merciless assault. 2D's head was thrown from side to side.

Russel: I said PUT HIM DOWN, MURDOC. BEFORE I DO SOMETHING WE'RE ALL GONNA REGRET.

Noodle too leapt to her feet, throwing herself between Murdoc and 2D. She bit hard into Murdoc's hand trying to get him to release his stranglehold, but the red mist had come down and Murdoc held on tight. 2D's face had now turned a deep shade of blue, matching the colour of his spiky hair. If he'd had eyes they'd have been popping right out of his head by now.

Russel: I AIN'T GONNA TELL YOU AGAIN. DROP HIM!

2D: *URKKKAGH! UKKERRKK!! ACKKKAK!!!*

Russel lifted up his big medicine ball-sized fist and brought it crashing down upon the bass player's head. Murdoc dropped to the floor like a string-less puppet.

Freed from Murdoc's grip, 2D collapsed back on to the sofa and began gasping for air, his puny pigeon-chest sucking up deep desperate lungfuls . . .

Murdoc, still dazed, sat up swaying, birds tweeting around his throbbing cranium. A moment passed before he shook himself back to consciousness. Everyone realised that a big, big line had been crossed. Being humiliated in front of his own band was a step too far for Mr Murdoc Niccals. He'd brought this band to the top of the charts, around the world and all the way to Hollywood. And this is how they chose to repay him? He didn't need these ungrateful muppets any more. He'd be way better off on his own.

Murdoc: So that's how it is now, huh? Right then, my comrades. Enough's enough. It's been an incredible ride for all of us, especially me, but this is my stop. You lot lost the plot a long time ago. There's no way I can carry your sorry backsides any more.

Murdoc, his eyes ablaze with vitriol and venom, pointed his bony nicotine-encrusted finger right into 2D's face.

Murdoc: And you, you little blue-haired pigmy sod boy, are way too stupid to be alive. Let this be known, you've been a curse of banality since I first laid eyes on you. If it weren't for your precious vocals, I'd have strangled you into a box years ago.

He looked round the room at the others, and sneeringly offered them a last salute.

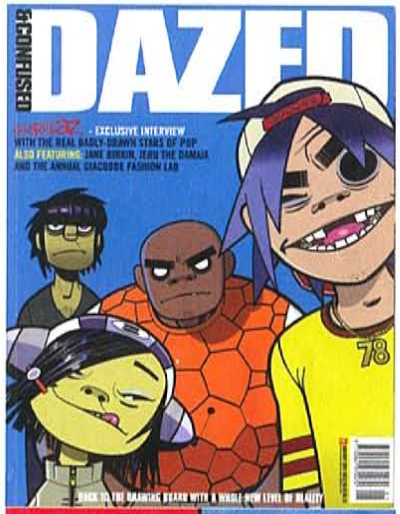
Murdoc: Happy life and all that, you losers. I'll see you on the other side. Ciao!

The door slammed behind him. And with that final kiss-off, Murdoc checked out of the hotel, checked out of the rented house and checked out of the band.

Gorillaz were over.

GORILLAZ

Interlude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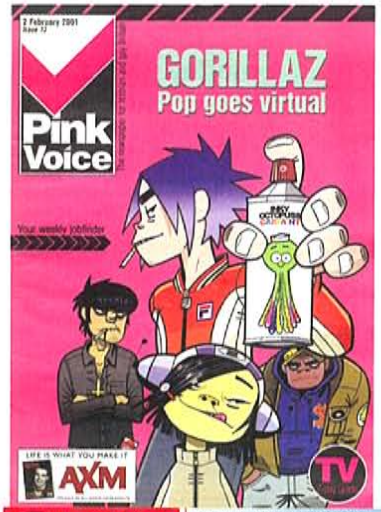
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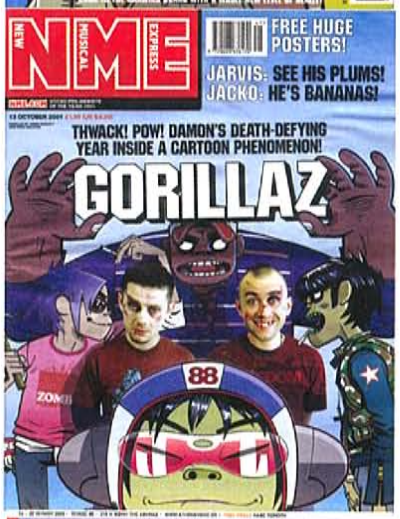
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SUMMER IN THE CITY

BANG
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MAXIMO PARK
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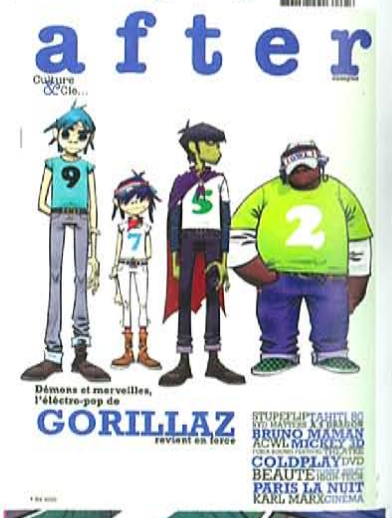
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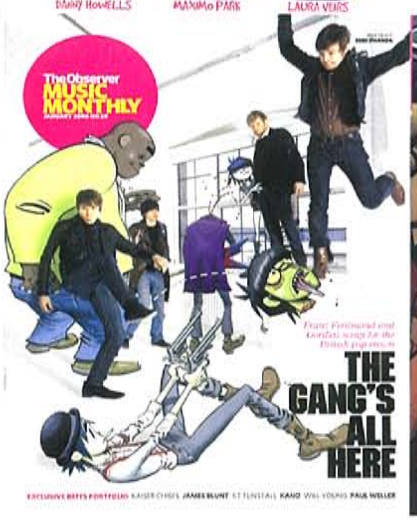
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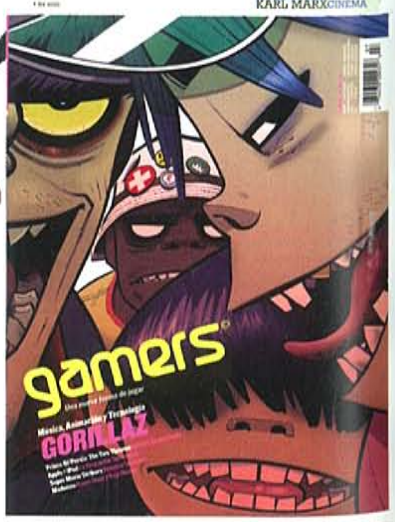
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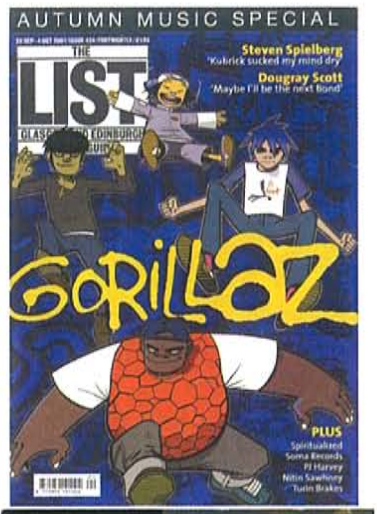
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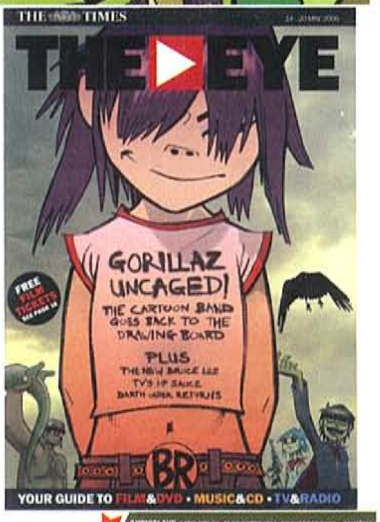
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THE CARTOON BAND GOES BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD
PLUS
YOUR GUIDE TO FILM&DVD • MUSIC&CD • TV&RADIO

Fan favourite and STAR WARS stalwart C3PO talks to The Big Issue
THE BIG ISSUE
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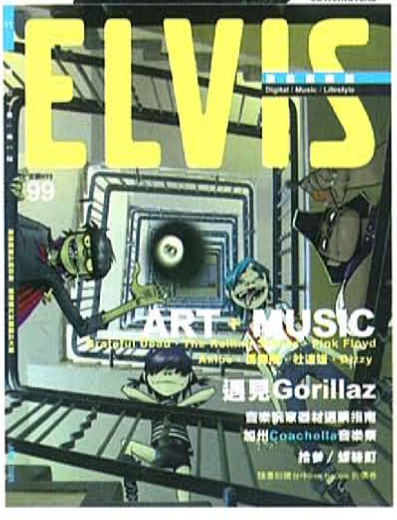
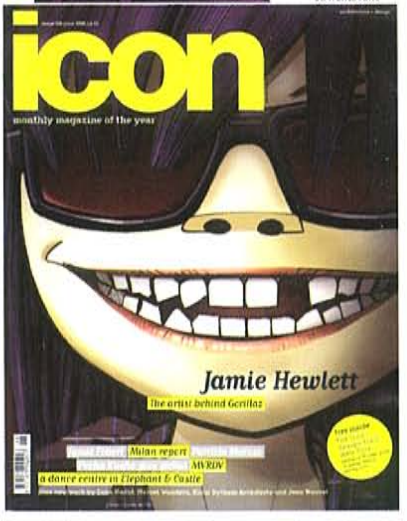
FIVE EIGHT
MUSIC BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE
GORILLAZ
MARKETING
World exclusive: their FIRST EVER business interview
MARKET ORCHESTRATION
PROJECTION PLAN

Paris Le guide de vos sorties
Télérama
Le phénomène Gorillaz
LA MUSIQUE DU FUTUR ?


ELVIS
ART + MUSIC
Pink Floyd
Gorillaz

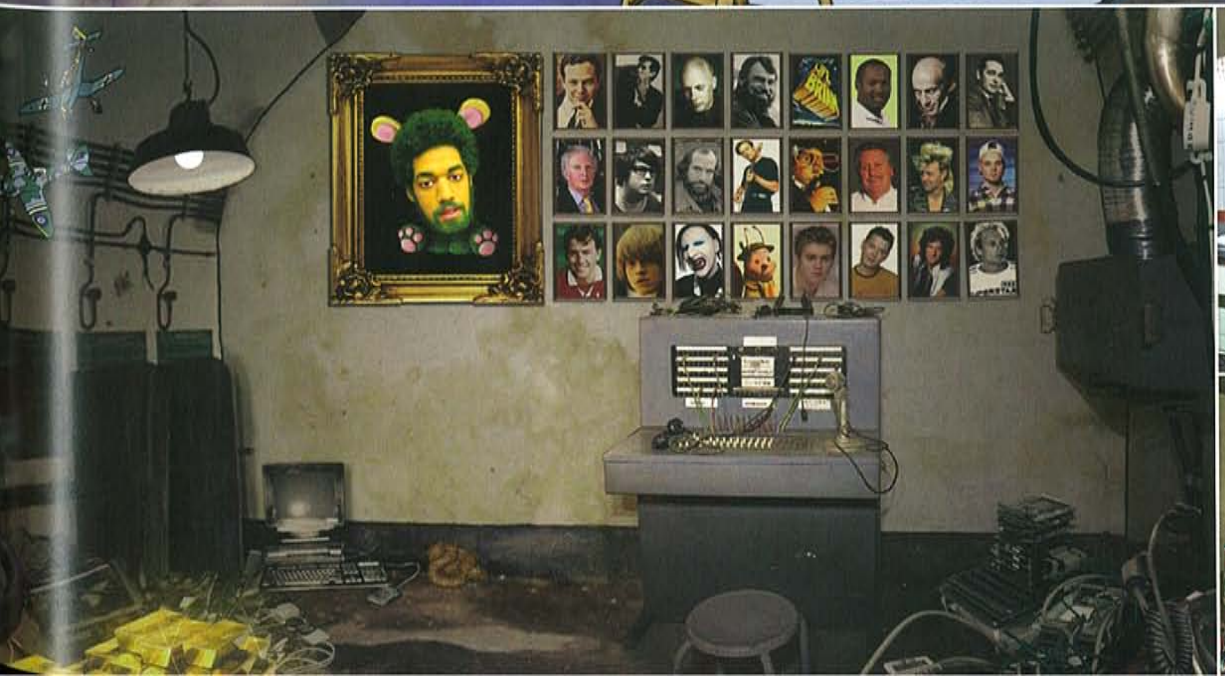

icon
monthly magazine of the year
Jamie Hewlett
The artist behind Gorillaz

IT'S COMING UP
IT'S THERE!
KONG STUDIOS
GROOVE BONES SELECTA!

LEVEL
1

GORILLAZ DEMON DAYS LIVE
EL MANANA
FEEL GOOD inc
TOMORROW COMES TODAY
ROCK THE HOUSE

I ♥ HOGS
GORILLAZ



PLEASE PAY HERE
SHOP

Discography

GORILLAZ

Release Date: 26/03/01
Cat number: 5311380
Formats: CD / Ltd Edition CD Digipak, Gatefold 2 x LP / MC / MD
Highest UK Chart Position: 3
Highest US Chart Position: 14

Tracklisting:
1. Re-Hash
2. 5/4
3. Tomorrow Comes Today
4. New Genious (Brother)
5. Clint Eastwood
6. Man Research (Clapper)
7. Punk
8. Sound Check (Gravity)
9. Double Bass
10. Rock The House
11. 19-2000
12. Latin Simone (Que Pasa Contigo)
13. Starshine
14. Slow Country
15. M1 A1

Further info: all versions feature hidden track Clint Eastwood (Ed Case/Sweetie Irie Refix) and enhanced element w/ key to Murdoc's Winnebago plus desktop wallpaper.

GORILLAZ – LTD EDITION

Release date: 2/7/01
Bonus Content: 19/2000 (Soulchild Remix)
Cat Number: 5344880

Further info: original UK Ltd Edition pressing issued in tri-fold Digipak sleeve w/ extra booklet & liner notes. US version also features bonus tracks Dracula & Left Hand Suzuki Method.

The Korean issue of the album (EKPD-0922) contains 2 CDs. The first CD contains the re-issue bonus track 19/2000 (Soulchild Remix). The second CD is a CD-ROM and has the following tracklist: Rock The House (Video), Noodlefight (Game), Cymbalism, Gorillaz Wallpaper, Rock The House Screensaver, 19/2000 Driving Game (Geep Simulator).

Tomorrow Comes Today EP

Release Date: 27/11/00
Formats: ECD / 12"
UK Chart position: Not chart eligible

CD (CDR6545)
1. Tomorrow Comes Today
2. Rock the House
3. Latin Simone
4. 12D3
5. Tomorrow Comes Today Video

12" (12R6545)
A1. Tomorrow Comes Today
A2. Rock The House
B1. Latin Simone
B2. 12D3

Clint Eastwood

Release Date: 05/03/01
Formats: ECD / 12" / MC
UK Chart position: 3

CD (CDR6552)
1. Clint Eastwood
2. Clint Eastwood (Ed Case/Sweetie Irie Refix Edit)
3. Dracula
4. Clint Eastwood Video

12" (12R6552)
A1. Clint Eastwood
A2. Clint Eastwood (Ed Case/Sweetie Irie Refix) (Edit)
B1. Clint Eastwood (Phi Life/Cypher Remix)

MC (TCR6552)
1. Clint Eastwood
2. Clint Eastwood (Ed Case/Sweetie Irie Refix) (Edit)
3. Dracula

19/2000

Release Date: 25/06/01
Formats: ECD / 12" / MC
UK Chart position: 6

CD (CDR6559)
1. 19/2000
2. 19/2000 (Soulchild Remix)
3. Left Hand Suzuki Method
4. 19/2000 (Making of the Video)

12" (12R6559)
A1. 19/2000
A2. Left Hand Suzuki Method
B1. 19/2000 (The Wiseguys House of Wisdom Remix)

MC (TCR6559)
1. 19/2000
2. 19/2000 (Soulchild Remix)
3. Hip Albatross

Rock the House

Release Date: 22/10/01
Formats: ECD1 / ECD 2 / MC
UK Chart position: 18

CD1 (CDR6565)
1. Rock the House
2. The Sounder
3. Faust
4. Rock the House (Making of the video)

CD2 (CDRS6565)
1. Rock the House
2. Ghost Train
3. 19/2000
4. 19/2000 (Video)

MC (TCR6565)
1. Rock the House
2. The Sounder
3. Ghost Train

911 (featuring D12)

Release Date: 07/12/01
UK Chart Position: Not chart eligible, download only

Tomorrow Comes Today

Release Date: 25/02/02
Formats: CD1 / DVD / 12"
UK Chart Position: 33

CD1 (CDR6573)
1. Tomorrow Comes Today
2. Film Music
3. Tomorrow Dub
4. Tomorrow Comes Today (Enhanced Video)

DVD (DVDR6573)
1. Tomorrow Comes Today (DVD Video)
2. Film Music (DVD Audio)
3. Tomorrow Dub (DVD Audio)
4. Jump The Gut Pt.1 (Video)
5. Jump The Gut Pt.2 (Video)

12": (12R6573)
A1. Tomorrow Comes Today
A2. Tomorrow Dub
B1. Film Music (Mode Remix)

GSIDES

Release Date: 11/03/02
Formats: CD
UK Chart Position: 64
US Chart Position: 84

CD (5369420)
1. 19/2000 (Soulchild Remix)
2. Dracula
3. Rock The House (Radio Edit)
4. The Sounder
5. Faust
6. Clint Eastwood (Phi Life/Cypher Version)
7. Ghost Train
8. Hip Albatross
9. Left Hand Suzuki Method
10. 12D3
11. Clint Eastwood (Enhanced Video)
12. Rock The House (Enhanced Video)

Further info: the US release differs from the other releases, with both enhanced videos being omitted as well as Rock The House, Dracula and Left Hand Suzuki Method, but with the exclusive additions of Latin Simone and 19/2000 (The Wiseguys House of Wisdom Remix).

LAIKA COME HOME

Release Date: 24/06/02
Formats: CD / Ltd Edition CD / 2 x LP
Cat Numbers: 5403622, 5399822, 5399821

CD (72435403624)
LP (0724353998219)
LTD EDITION
1. Jungle Fresh (19/2000)
2. Strictly Rubbadub (Slow Country)
3. Bañana Baby (Tomorrow Comes Today)
4. Monkey Racket (Man Research)
5. De-Punked (Punk)
6. P45 (5/4)
7. Dub Ø 9 (Starshine)
8. Crooked Dub (Sound Check)
9. Mutant Genious (New Genious)
10. Come Again (Re-Hash)
11. Fistful Of Peanuts (Clint Eastwood)
12. Lil' Dub Chefin' (M1 A1)

Ltd Edition (digipack) (07243 539 982 26)
Bonus Track: Clint Eastwood mix (hidden track)

The Ltd Edition CD (packaged in a tri-fold digipak) & Vinyl editions of the album also contained a bonus mix of Clint Eastwood as a hidden track. The vinyl also contains an alternate mix of Slow Country. The album is titled 'Laika' as in the first dog in space.

Lil' Dub Chefin

Release date: 22/7/02
Formats: CD / 10"
UK Chart Position: 73

CD: CDR6584
1. Lil Dub Chefin (Album Version)
2. Lil Dub Chefin (Radio Edit)
3. Space Monkeyz Theme
4. Lil Dub Chefin (Enhanced Video)

10": 10R6584
A1. Lil Dub Chefin (Album Version)
B1. Lil Dub Chefin (Radio Edit)
B2. Space Monkeyz Theme

DEMON DAYS

Release Date: 23/05/05
Cat Number: 094631169120 (UK CD)
Formats: CD / 2 x Gatefold LP / MC
Highest UK Chart Position: 1
Highest US Chart Position: 6

Tracklisting:
1. Intro
2. Last Living Souls
3. Kids With Guns
4. O Green World
5. Dirty Harry
6. Feel Good Inc.
7. El Mañana
8. Every Planet We Reach Is Dead
9. November Has Come
10. All Alone
11. White Light
12. DARE
13. Fire Coming Out Of The Monkey's Head
14. Don't Get Lost In Heaven
15. Demon Days

Further info:
#1 debut in France, Hong Kong, Switzerland and the UAE
#2 debut in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Mexico and Slovenia
5x Platinum UK
3x Platinum New Zealand & Ireland
2x Platinum US & Australia
Platinum in Canada & Hong Kong

DEMON DAYS LTD EDITION

Release Date: 23/05/05
Cat Number: 0724347440700
(UK CD)

Format: CD / DVD
Bonus DVD
The Swagga – Audio track
Feel Good Inc. – Video
Feel Good Inc. – 'The Making of' animatic
Feel Good Inc. – Audio Commentary from the Band
Gorillaz Talent Quest – G Bite Animation
Gorillaz On Set – G Bite Animation
Online access to exclusive Wallpapers, Screensavers

Further info:
A limited edition run of the album was released featuring a bonus dvd in plastic packaging. The CD itself was packaged in a fold-out digipak, allowing fans to choose which member of the band they wished to feature on the cover. The DVD and liner notes were housed in a separate booklet. The limited edition run gave fans a crowbar as part of their website inventory, which could be used to break into a cupboard in Kong Studios, featuring the aforementioned items as well as a further exclusive audio track, Happy Landfill.

DEMON DAYS – JAPANESE EDITIONS:

Release date: 11/05/05
Cat number: TOCP66380
Bonus Track: 68 State

Release date: 05/08/06
Cat Number: TOCP66466
Bonus Track: People

Release date: 08/03/06
Cat Number: TOCP66534
Bonus Track: Hong Kong (Live)

Feel Good Inc.

Release Date: 09/05/05
Formats: CD / DVD / 7"
UK Chart position: 2

CD (CDR6663)
1. Feel Good Inc.
2. Spitting Out the Demons

DVD (DVDR6663)
1. Feel Good Inc.
2. Spitting Out the Demons
3. Bill Murray

7" Picture Disc (R6663)
A. Feel Good Inc.
B. 68 State

DARE

Release Date: 29/08/05

Formats: CD1 / CD2
UK Chart Position: 1

CD1 (CD6668)
1. DARE
2. Clint Eastwood (LIVE) featuring De La Soul & Bootie Brown

CD2 (CDRS6668)
1. DARE
2. Highway Under Construction
3. DARE (Soulwax Mix)

DVD (DVDR6668)
1. DARE
2. DARE Animatic
3. People
4. Samba at 13

Dirty Harry
Release Date: 21/11/05
Formats: CD1 / CD2 / DVD
UK Chart Position: 6

CD1 (CDR6676)
1. Dirty Harry
2. All Alone (LIVE)

CD2 (CDRS6676)
1. Dirty Harry
2. Hongkongaton
3. Dirty Harry (Chopper Remix)

DVD (DVDR6676)
1. Dirty Harry (Video)
2. Murdoc is God
3. Dirty Harry (Instrumental)
4. Dirty Harry (Animatic)

Kids With Guns / El Mañana
Release Date: 10/04/05

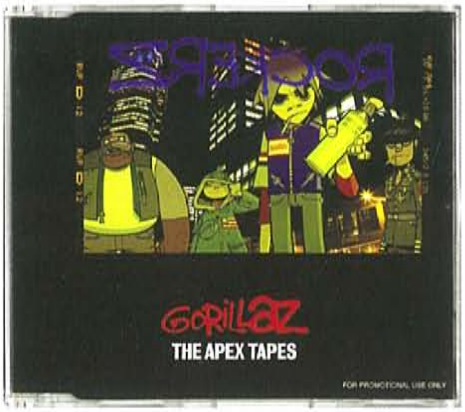
Formats: CD / DVD / 7"
UK Chart Position: 27

CD (CDR6685)
1. Kids With Guns
2. El Mañana
3. Stop the Dams

DVD (DVDR6685)
1. El Mañana
2. Kids With Guns
3. Don't Get Lost in Heaven (Original Demo)
4. El Mañana (Animatic)

7" (R6685)
1. Kids With Guns
2. El Mañana

INTERVIEW DISCS

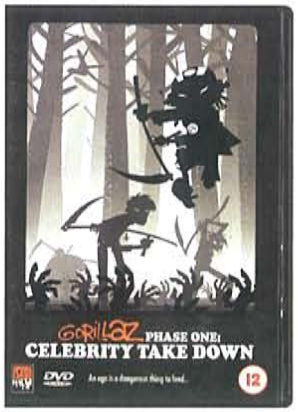


The Apex Tapes
Release Date: March 2001
Cat Number: ZOMBIE002
Format: CD

We are the Dury
Release Date: April 2005
Cat Number: DEMON01, DEMONINT01
Format: CD

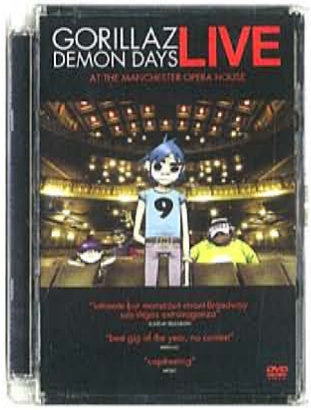
MIXTAPE
Russel's Roadkill Mixtape
Release Date: May 2005
Format: CD

DVD DISCOGRAPHY



Gorillaz – Phase 1: Celebrity Takedown
Release Date: 18/11/02
Cat Number: 4901310

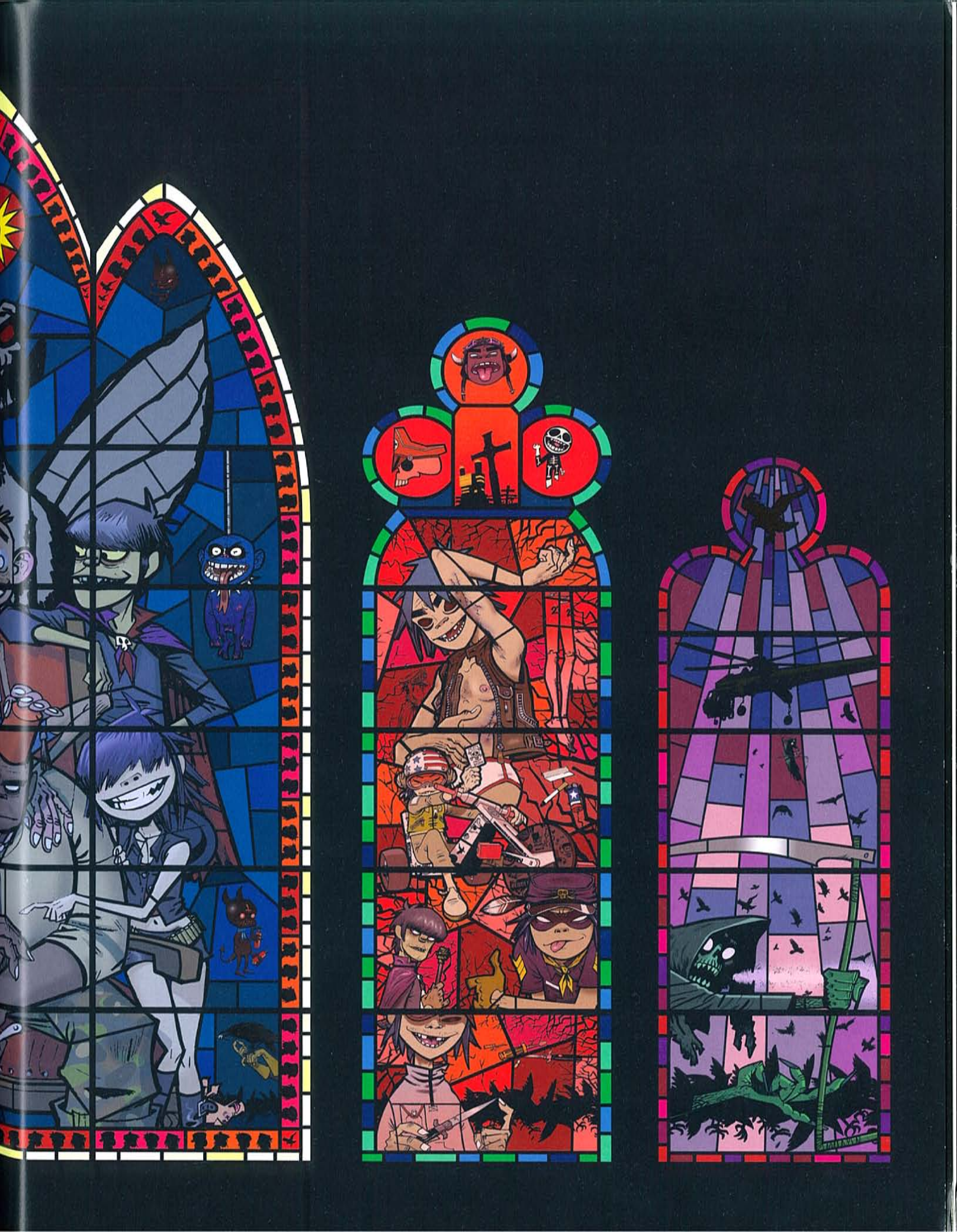
Japanese Edition
Phase 1: Celebrity Takedown
Release Date: 26/02/03



Gorillaz – Demon Days: LIVE
Release Date: 27/03/06
Cat Number: TOBW3269
UK DVD Chart Position : 1

Gorillaz – Phase 2: Slowboat to Hades
Release Date: 30/10/06
Cat No: 3744629

23
TAZAR
挑戦



23 Skidoo!

The most observant Gorillaz fans might have noticed that among the Peter Falk posters, duck stickers, dinkle doodles and zombies the number 23 pops up around our band rather more than is strictly necessary.

Is it just coincidence? Or could there be something more to it . . . ?

Actually, 23 is considered by some to be the cosmic number of coincidence. The number of man. A mathematical umbrella for a whole heap of otherwise unrelated stuff. How many chromosomes does a parent pass on to a child? 23. How many seconds for blood to flow round a human body? 23. Where does the number of the beast originate? 2 ÷ 3, or .666. How do you get from Piccadilly Circus to Westbourne Grove? 23. It is, in the words of one of its disciples, kind of a big, cosmic conundrum of a number.

The study of 23, or Vigintitresology if you're feeling fancy, has a history as long as it is broad. Fans and students of 23 include Buddha, William Burroughs, Winston Churchill, Aleister Crowley and Throbbing Gristle's Genesis P.Orridge. Friend of Beelzebub and happy deviant Crowley produced a cabalistic dictionary to share some of his dark secrets with his followers.

His entry for 23 is 'parting, removal, separation, joy, a thread, and life . . . '. Allegedly, that knowledge was put to good use during WW2 when Churchill visited Crowley for counsel, when the battle against the Nazis wasn't going his way. Crowley's advice: flick 'em the V. The 2 fingers up, 3 fingers down position wasn't showing the Nazis V for Victory but 23, a much more powerful form of juju.

The truth behind Churchill's consultation was that Crowley recognized that Adolf Hitler was steeped in the occult and symbolism, and Crowley advised Churchill to use Hitler's own belief system against him. The V sign was a symbolic gesture to combat the Swastika pictogram as used by Adolf. Both Crowley and Churchill understood that Hitler would recognize the use of the magical symbolism, and have his confidence shaken by his own unhinged beliefs. A-ha!!

Once initiated into the church of 23, don't expect to escape its influence. It will follow you everywhere. Type it in to Google and you'll find any amount of hypotheses, conspiracy theories, enigmas and examples. Here are just a quick few for anyone who is still using a dial-up connection . . .

The Knights Templar, consecrated to the protection of pilgrims and the defence of the Holy Land, had 23 leaders and ended on 13 of October (13 + 10) 1314.
Julius Caesar was stabbed 23 times.
Keith Moon's birthday was 23 August.

Murdoc (rolling eyes): Oh wow. That's . . . heavy.

The first Morse Code transmission – 'What hath God wrought?' – was from the Bible passage Numbers 23:23.
Dr Pepper proudly announces that it is an 'authentic blend of 23 flavors'.

Murdoc: That changes everything!

W, the 23rd letter of the Latin alphabet has 2 points down, 3 points up.

Murdoc: The phrase, 'This is a big load of rubbish' contains exactly 23 letters.

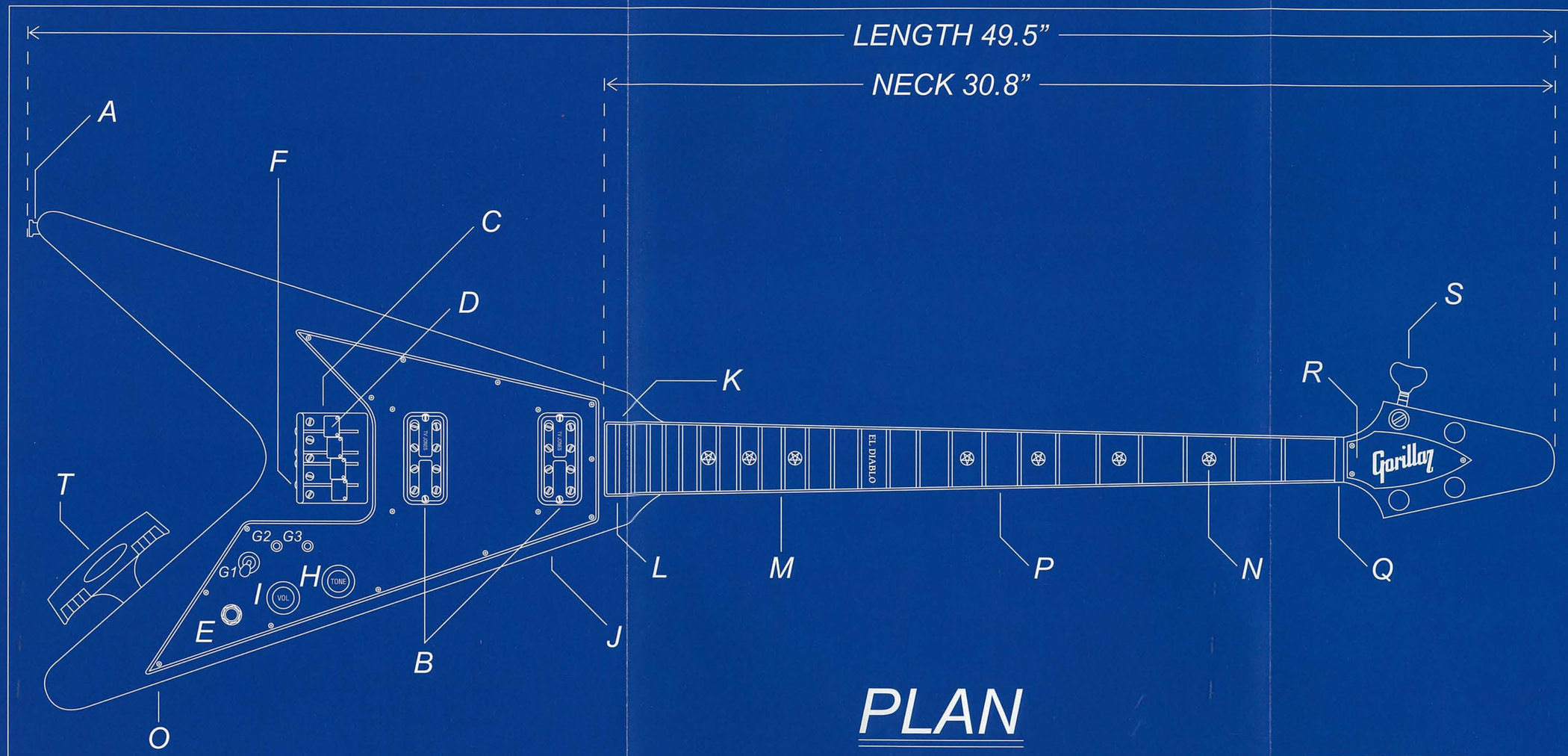
Adding the numbers in 9/11/2001 gives 23: 9 + 11 + 2 + 1.
Bonnie and Clyde were killed on May 23.

Murdoc: Sound of barrel being scraped.

And er . . . U2 know it too. U is the 21st letter of the alphabet. 21 + 2 = 23. Actually, looking at this now . . . the whole thing's just a big bunch of numerological nonsense, isn't it? It's a self-fulfilling prophecy; the more you look for it, the more you see it.

Murdoc: It takes 23 swift kicks with a Cuban-heeled shoe to boot the head off a yak. Coincidence or not? Shall we?

Yes. Let's move on.



PLAN

MURDOC NICCALS' 'EL DIABLO' BASS GUITAR

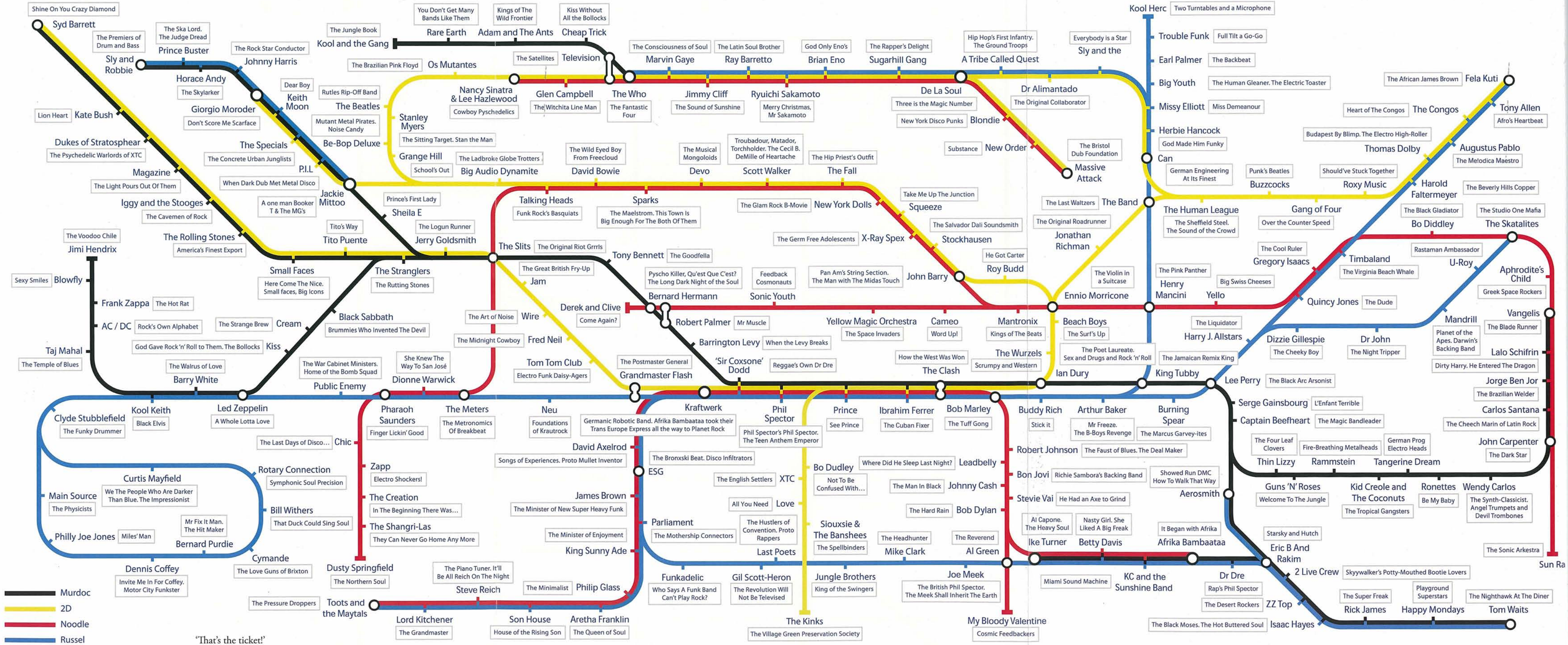
KEY

A. Dimarzio ‘Strap Lock’ buttons for bass strap.
B. TV Jones Thundertron Bass Pickups. Custom Electronics à la ‘butt probe’, Lovetone ‘Destroyer / Ass Wrecker’ Active Circuits.
C. Leo Quin Badass II Chrome Bridge. Custom-made to Murdoc’s specifications.
D. Graphite ‘ferraglide’ SS Saddles.
E. ½” input jack. Made by John West.
F. ⅛” titanium-based longitudinal adjustment screw.
G1. 4-Way switch. Bottom position activates pickups closest to the neck (i.e. more bass effect) middle position blends all volume and tone; top position activates pickups furthest from neck (i.e. more treble effect). Shift gear switch down for hyper-bass. Caution ‘Use Only In Emergency’. Powered by 3 9volt batteries.
G2. Panic Button. This kicks in the seismic sub-bass ‘Super Sub-Bass Angerlicker / Fuzz Feltch’.
G3. ‘The President’ — Hotline to the White House. Flashes red in use. ‘I can’t really tell you about this. Top Secret. Keep Schtum. Meninblack and all that.’
H. Tom Bakerlite knob — Tone control. ‘Stolen off the set of Doctor Who.’
I. Tom Bakerlite knob — Volume control. This also has the ‘push / pull’ capability. It’s an ‘in time / out of time / quantize’ thing. I call this button ‘The Time Skipper’. Both H & I are interchangeable with the Mexican Iron Skull knobs.
J. Thickness of Body. ‘Hefty Girth: A generous 1 inch.’
K. Neck width at Body 2 ⅜”.
L. 24 fret double octave scale.
M. Frets — Hallmarked Silver.
N. Bull Elephant Ivory Tusk — Inverted pentagram motif.
O. 2000-year-old diseased black bog oak wood. ‘Black as night, hard as rock.’ Stained in otter’s blood.
P. Fretboard – African Black Ebony (Diospyros crassiflora).
Q. Ligre bone nut.
R. Carbon Graphite Truss Rod — ‘That’s to a NASA spec. Don’t touch’.
S. ‘Grover’ Titan Machineheads.
T. Starter cord.

Extras

Strings: Hand-spun gold-plated Maxima strings.
Gorillaz logo on headstock.
Body lined with steel.
Pull out machete / thigh rest.
Mirrored chrome scratch plate — Emblazoned with the Seven Deadly sins.

Guitar Consultancy by Morgan Nicholls (no relation)


Shine On You Crazy Diamond
Syd Barrett
The Premiers of Drum and Bass
The Ska Lord. The Judge Dread
Prince Buster
The Rock Star Conductor
Johnny Harris
Sly and Robbie
Horace Andy
The Skylarker
Dear Boy
Keith Moon
Giorgio Moroder
Don't Score Me Scarface
Lion Heart
Kate Bush
Dukes of Stratosphear
The Psychedelic Warlords of XTC
Magazine
The Light Pours Out Of Them
Iggy and the Stooges
The Cavemen of Rock
The Rolling Stones
America's Finest Export
The Voodoo Chile
Jimi Hendrix
Sexy Smiles
Blowfly
Frank Zappa
The Hot Rat
AC / DC
Rock's Own Alphabet
God Gave Rock 'n' Roll to Them. The Bollocks
Taj Mahal
The Temple of Blues
The Walrus of Love
Barry White
Clyde Stubblefield
The Funky Drummer
Kool Keith
Black Elvis
Led Zeppelin
A Whole Lotta Love
Curtis Mayfield
Main Source
We The People Who Are Darker Than Blue. The Impressionist
The Physicists
Philly Joe Jones
Miles' Man
Mr Fix It Man. The Hit Maker
Bernard Purdie
Dennis Coffey
Invite Me In For Coffey. Motor City Funkster
Rotary Connection
Symphonic Soul Precision
Bill Withers
That Duck Could Sing Soul
Cymande
The Love Guns of Brixton
The Pressure Droppers
The Rutting Stones
Small Faces
Here Come The Nice. Small faces, Big Icons
The Strangler
Black Sabbath
Brummies Who Invented The Devil
Cream
The Strange Brew
Kiss
The War Cabinet Ministers. Home of the Bomb Squad
Public Enemy
Tito Puente
Tito's Way
Jerry Goldsmith
The Logun Runner
Sheila E
Prince's First Lady
Jackie Mittoo
A one man Booker T & The MG's
P.I.L
When Dark Dub Met Metal Disco
The Specials
The Concrete Urban Junglists
Be-Bop Deluxe
Mutant Metal Pirates. Noise Candy
The Beatles
Rutles Rip-Off Band
Grange Hill
School's Out
Stanley Myers
The Sitting Target. Stan the Man
The Brazilian Pink Floyd
Os Mutantes
The Jungle Book
Kool and the Gang
You Don't Get Many Bands Like Them
Rare Earth
Kings of The Wild Frontier
Adam and The Ants
Kiss Without All the Bollocks
Cheap Trick
The Satellites
Television
Nancy Sinatra & Lee Hazlewood
Cowboy Pyschedelics
Glen Campbell
The Witchita Line Man
The Who
The Fantastic Four
The Ladbroke Globe Trotters
Big Audio Dynamite
The Wild Eyed Boy From Freecloud
David Bowie
The Musical Mongoloids
Devo
Troubadour, Matador, Torchholder. The Cecil B. DeMille of Heartache
Scott Walker
The Hip Priest's Outfit
The Fall
The Consciousness of Soul
Marvin Gaye
The Latin Soul Brother
Ray Barretto
God Only Eno's
Brian Eno
The Rapper's Delight
Sugarhill Gang
The Sound of Sunshine
Ryuichi Sakamoto
Merry Christmas, Mr Sakamoto
Hip Hop's First Infantry. The Ground Troops
A Tribe Called Quest
De La Soul
Three is the Magic Number
New York Disco Punks
Blondie
Substance
New Order
Everybody is a Star
Sly and the
Dr Alimantado
The Original Collaborator
The Bristol Dub Foundation
Massive Attack
Kool Herc
Two Turntables and a Microphone
Trouble Funk
Full Tilt a Go-Go
Earl Palmer
The Backbeat
Big Youth
The Human Gleaner. The Electric Toaster
Missy Elliott
Miss Demeanour
Herbie Hancock
God Made Him Funky
Can
German Engineering At Its Finest
Punk's Beatles
Buzzcocks
Should've Stuck Together
Roxy Music
Heart of The Congos
The Congos
Budapest By Blimp. The Electro High-Roller
Thomas Dolby
The African James Brown
Fela Kuti
Tony Allen
Afro's Heartbeat
Augustus Pablo
The Melodica Maestro
Harold Faltermeyer
The Beverly Hills Copper
The Black Gladiator
Bo Diddley
The Studio One Mafia
The Skatalites
Aphrodite's Child
Greek Space Rockers
Vangelis
The Blade Runner
Lalo Schifrin
Dirty Harry. He Entered The Dragon
Jorge Ben Jor
The Brazilian Welder
Carlos Santana
The Cheech Marin of Latin Rock
John Carpenter
The Dark Star
Sun Ra
Wendy Carlos
The Synth-Classicist. Angel Trumpets and Devil Trombones
Ronettes
Be My Baby
Kid Creole and The Coconuts
The Tropical Gangsters
Guns 'N' Roses
Welcome To The Jungle
Thin Lizzy
Rammstein
Tangerine Dream
The Four Leaf Clovers
Fire-Breathing Metalheads
German Prog Electro Heads
Captain Beefheart
The Magic Bandleader
Serge Gainsbourg
L'Enfant Terrible
Lee Perry
The Black Arc Arsonist
King Tubby
The Jamaican Remix King
Harry J. Allstars
Dizzie Gillespie
The Cheeky Boy
Dr John
The Night Tripper
Mandrill
Planet of the Apes. Darwin's Backing Band
Quincy Jones
The Dude
Timbaland
The Virginia Beach Whale
Gregory Isaacs
The Cool Ruler
Rastaman Ambassador
U-Roy
Henry Mancini
The Pink Panther
Big Swiss Cheeses
Yello
The Human League
The Sheffield Steel. The Sound of the Crowd
Gang of Four
Over the Counter Speed
The Band
The Last Waltzers
Jonathan Richman
The Original Roadrunner
Ennio Morricone
The Violin in a Suitcase
Ian Dury
The Poet Laureate. Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll
Beach Boys
The Surf's Up
The Liquidator
Aerosmith
Showed Run DMC How To Walk That Way
Run DMC
Burning Spear
The Marcus Garvey-ites
Arthur Baker
Mr Freeze. The B-Boys Revenge
Buddy Rich
Stick it
Robert Johnson
The Faust of Blues. The Deal Maker
Leadbelly
Bon Jovi
Richie Sambora's Backing Band
Stevie Vai
He Had an Axe to Grind
Ike Turner
Al Capone. The Heavy Soul
Betty Davis
Nasty Girl. She Liked A Big Freak
Afrika Bambaataa
It Began with Afrika
Eric B And Rakim
Starsky and Hutch
2 Live Crew
Skywalker's Potty-Mouthed Bootie Lovers
Rick James
The Super Freak
Happy Mondays
Playground Superstars
Tom Waits
The Nighthawk At The Diner
Isaac Hayes
The Black Moses. The Hot Buttered Soul
ZZ Top
The Desert Rockers
Dr Dre
Rap's Phil Spector
KC and the Sunshine Band
Miami Sound Machine
Joe Meek
The British Phil Spector. The Meek Shall Inherit The Earth
My Bloody Valentine
Cosmic Feedbackers
Al Green
The Reverend
Mike Clark
The Headhunter
Johnny Cash
The Man In Black
Bob Dylan
The Hard Rain
Leadbelly
Where Did He Sleep Last Night?
Bob Marley
The Tuff Gong
Ibrahim Ferrer
The Cuban Fixer
Prince
See Prince
Bo Dudley
Not To Be Confused With...
XTC
The English Settlers
Love
All You Need
Siouxsie & The Banshees
The Spellbinders
Jungle Brothers
King of the Swingers
The Kinks
The Village Green Preservation Society
Gil Scott-Heron
The Revolution Will Not Be Televised
Last Poets
Funkadelic
Who Says A Funk Band Can't Play Rock?
Parliament
The Mothership Connectors
The Hustlers of Convention. Proto Rappers
ESG
The Bronxski Beat. Disco Infiltrators
Phil Spector
Phil Spector's Phil Spector. The Teen Anthem Emperor
Kraftwerk
Germanic Robotic Band. Afrika Bambaataa took their Trans Europe Express all the way to Planet Rock
Grandmaster Flash
'Sir Coxsone' Dodd
Reggae's Own Dr Dre
Barrington Levy
When the Levy Breaks
Derek and Clive
Come Again?
Wire
The Art of Noise
Fred Neil
The Midnight Cowboy
Tom Tom Club
Electro Funk Daisy-Agers
The Postmaster General
Dionne Warwick
She Knew The Way To San José
Pharaoh Saunders
Finger Lickin' Good
The Meters
The Metronomics Of Breakbeat
Neu
Foundations of Krautrock
Chic
The Last Days of Disco...
Zapp
Electro Shockers!
The Creation
In The Beginning There Was...
The Shangri-Las
They Can Never Go Home Any More
Dusty Springfield
The Northern Soul
Toots and the Maytals
The Piano Tuner. It'll Be All Reich On The Night
Steve Reich
The Minimalist
Philip Glass
King Sunny Ade
The Minister of Enjoyment
James Brown
The Minister of New Super Heavy Funk
David Axelrod
Songs of Experiences. Proto Mullet Inventor
Lord Kitchener
The Grandmaster
Son House
House of the Rising Son
Aretha Franklin
The Queen of Soul
The Slits
The Original Riot Grrrls
The Great British Fry-Up
Jam
Talking Heads
Funk Rock's Basquiats
Tony Bennett
The Goodfella
Sparks
The Maelstrom. This Town Is Big Enough For The Both Of Them
Pysco Killer, Qu'est Que C'est? The Long Dark Night of the Soul
Bernard Hermann
Feedback Cosmonauts
Sonic Youth
Pan Am's String Section. The Man with The Midas Touch
John Barry
The Germ Free Adolescents
X-Ray Spex
The Glam Rock B-Movie
New York Dolls
Take Me Up The Junction
Squeeze
The Salvador Dali Soundsmith
Stockhausen
He Got Carter
Roy Budd
Robert Palmer
Mr Muscle
Yellow Magic Orchestra
The Space Invaders
Cameo
Word Up!
Mantronix
Kings of The Beats
The Wurzels
Scrumpy and Western
How the West Was Won
The Clash
Germ Free Adolescents
Public Image Ltd
Metal Box
Magazine
The Light Pours Out Of Them
Murdoc
2D
Noodle
Russel
'That's the ticket!'

Chapter 7
A Season in Hell

'In these demon days it's so cold inside
So hard for a good soul to survive
When lies become reality
You numb yourself with drugs and TV
Pick yourself up it's a brand new day
So turn yourself round
Don't burn yourself, turn yourself
Turn yourself around into the sun!
To the sun, to the sun . . .
To the sun, to the sun . . .'

Murdoc Goes to Mexico

'Every great band is destroyed by their success. Cartoon bands are no exception' NOODLE

After the tedious events in Hollywood, our charismatic leader and bass-playing lethargio split town and decided to head south to Mexico for a little sun, warm tequila and cheap senoritas; far away from scripts, screens, bands, bullshit and that twerp 2D.

Murdoc: I shoved Magazine's 'Real Life' album into the 8-track cassette deck of the Pontiac I'd hired, gave the motor a couple of cheeky revs and then made a beeline for Me-hi-coh! I hadn't been back there since the whole Placinos gig, but most of that aggro seemed to have blown over. The kids that were trapped underneath the ape balloon must've been freed by then, anyway. So I went to look up some old friends, give Dopey Joe a call, and maybe let off a little steam . . .

Nrrrrrnnnnnggggggghhhhh!!!!!!

September 27th 2002 *Murdoc leaves Los Angeles*

Murdoc: They wouldn't let me in at the border 'cos I'd left my passport back in LA, but security being the airtight, crack troop they are, I gave them a couple of 'Rock the House' T-shirts out the boot of the car and everything was fine. I thought they might've recognised me but I'd grown a little pencil thin Errol Flynn moustache, so maybe that was it. Anyhow I had no hassle on the streets so it was all good.

It wasn't long before Murdoc's peaceful vacation was disturbed.

Murdoc: See, this is what happened. I'd been hanging out down at the Avenida Revolución strip, mucking about for a couple of weeks drinking Michelada, going to gigs and stuff. I went to see Lightning Bolt down at The Bambi Club. Fantastic band. Just two of them. Sound like 50,000 cannons going off all at once. Anyway, after gigs I used to unwind down at this late night drinking den. Great place to hang out; always full of good company . . .

Russel: It was a brothel.

Murdoc: Hey, how did I know that? Anyhow I was running a pretty big tab down there, and one night they asked me to settle up, just as I was about to leave. But I was kinda running low on moolah. I was . . . er . . . waiting for a postal order to clear, see?

Murdoc got caught-red handed slipping dud cheques to the 'Tijuana Brass' down at 'The Chicken Choker' knocking shop.

Murdoc: As I said, I didn't have any cash on me so I wrote the girls a nice cheque. And autographed it, like. But apparently that wasn't good enough. But I did pay what I thought was good currency for a job well done.

Russel: Man, you are unbelievable.

Murdoc looks affronted at having to continually explain the situation to his own dear old bandmates.

Murdoc (indignantly): Hey, it ain't my fault that the funds weren't in the bank to back it up.

2D: Yeah, well then you tried to pay them with money that had your face printed on it.

Murdoc (smiles): That's legal tender where I come from, son. Anyway, so I'm just zipping myself up and next thing I know is like thirty cops burst out of everywhere. The place just erupts. *(In Mexican accent)* 'OK, Amigo. Put the weapon down'. I'm like, 'What the hell is this? An episode of Z-cars?' They slapped the cuffs on, hauled me off in one of the clapped-out clown cars that they call Police Vehicles, and slung me in jail. I thought it was a joke. But the punchline never came.

The judge took a mere twenty seconds to sentence Mr Niccals to thirty years in jail. Obviously the authorities come down hard on people who upset the tourist industries of Tijuana.

October 31st 2002 *Murdoc Niccals begins thirty-year jail sentence*

Murdoc: Yeah, I was in the La Mesa State prison. That place is really heavy, really overcrowded. I tell you, jail's just rubbish; being cooped up in the same room with the same people having the same conversation every day. In Mexican. Actually I guess touring's a bit like that. But no, prison, you can keep it. Table tennis, basket weaving, sewing mail sacks . . . I mean, really. Don't you know who I am?

When some of the inmates took a shine to him, Murdoc had to make some new friends. Fast. Murdoc the 'Mexican Backdoor-Bandito'? Not a good look. Enter Pedro 'Ears' Lapetzo and Carlos 'Three-faced' Benito. These two greasy crooks not only stopped Murdoc becoming the prison bike, they also taught him a little Mexican black magic. So he owes them plenty.

Murdoc: They sold me a little 'Mexican Insurance', as they put it. But those two actually helped me out in a pretty big way. More than once.

Whilst languishing in the slammer Murdoc also made a friend of the feathered variety, Cortez the raven. None of the other inmates would even look at this raven, a jailbird with a chilling reputation. Legend had it this creature was born in the folds of the Grim Reaper's cloak.

Murdoc: Oh yeah. Lovely plumage. But his ear-splitting squawk sounds like some idiot letting off a fire alarm in a library. Every morning at 7:00am: *'Arrrrrckkkkkkk!!!'* So yeah, a feathered, winged, egg-laying alarm clock. Just what I always wanted.

How come you didn't get your bandmates to help you out?

Murdoc: Er . . . What do you think? 2D's an idiot who can barely wipe his own doo-dah and from what I heard Russel was just whacked out of his mind on anti-psychosis medication. Oh, and here's a good idea: I'm already doing time for allegedly using counterfeit cheques to pay for the services of Mexican ladies, I get banged up and who do I get to help me? A thirteen-year-old Japanese girl. Yeah, right, the South American authorities are really gonna approve of that, aren't they? Now, that type of behaviour may look cute in a '60's caper movie, but in real life, I think they would have thrown away the key.

So rock legend, cultural scythe-wielder and animated behemoth Murdoc Niccals was now reduced merely to a number, known simply as 'Prisoner: 318008:999'.

Murdoc: Funnily enough, though, if you type that into a calculator and turn it upside down it comes out as '666:Boobie'. That alone was enough to keep me going.

Bear in mind he was thirty-six years old at the time, and really should have grown out of that type of thing.

Murdoc: So yeah, apart from that, that was it. Banged up in jail. And there was nothing I could do about it.

ABOVE
Pedro 'Ears' Lapetzo
'I must admit, though, his ears weren't his most striking feature'
MURDOC NICCALS

Russel Hobbs: The Breakbeat Breakdown

Outside of the penitentiary in Tijuana and back at the Hollywood house, our man Russel 'The Rock' was crumbling . . .

Russel: It was like my soul was slipping really slowly out of me. Like maple syrup gone bad. I couldn't explain it, a loss of direction . . . the success means nothing if you don't know what it's for or what to do with it. I . . . lost something. Maybe this was a transition to a different Russel. But at the time, having got what we wanted, I didn't know where to go.

Russel looks a little cautious about going into this again. His speech is slow and deliberate.

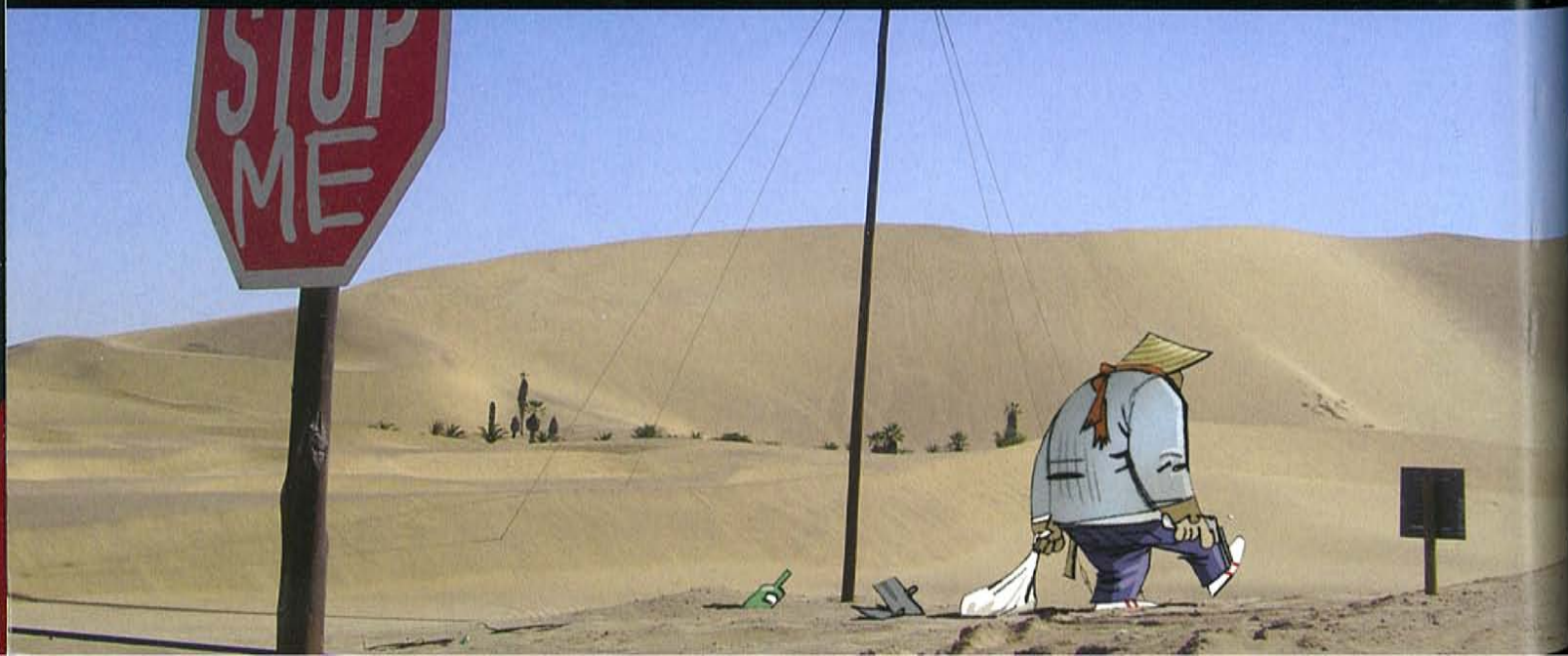
Russel: Oh . . . mmm . . . yeah. Things went from bad to weird to worse for me. I look back and it seems that maybe that whole period was happening to someone else. After Murdoc split, after the film thing collapsed, I remember thinking I'd just hang loose in LA for a while. Noodle left for Japan almost immediately. Then 2D disappeared and I just kinda . . . stayed in the house. But then the party turned bad. Things started going missing, and the crowd that dropped by went from being A-list to trust-fund dropouts and then finally . . . people just seemed to come and go as they wanted. Day and night. It got real crazy. I think Rick James made an appearance or two. The movie director Alfred C. Klinker was phoning the house every hour, screaming. He was just in a rage about the whole film thing not working out. He said he'd dropped $100 million on the film. He said he was going to shoot Gorillaz.

Murdoc: Oh, so he was still up for making the film, then? That's good.

Russel: The only decent people I met out there the whole time were this Australian polar bear and some out-of-work crocodile. Funnily enough, they came to visit us at Kong recently.

Murdoc stares straight ahead.

Russel: Eventually, a group of hippies just squatted the place and made out it was theirs. That's when Wee Jimmy Manson moved in permanently and started to really disrupt the whole vibe. Something really . . . dark and sinister about him. With Murdoc gone, he put himself in the position of leader, and kinda got people to do his bidding. Almost like he was trying to *be*



LEFT
Russel Hobbs 'The Wandering Star'

Murdoc. His commands jumped from making tea to ripping off chainstores to eventually some plan to bump off high-profile bands in order to cash in on the merchandize of theirs that he'd already bought.

None of us had really taken him seriously. I think he really was tryna get Murdoc's respect in the beginning. We'd met him a few times out, but by the time he moved into the house, Murdoc had already gone.

Murdoc: Which in hindsight I think was a very good thing.

Russel: The scene was very heavy, and I became disorientated. So I just walked out of there and left the whole thing behind. I had nowhere really to go. I just . . . wandered around. Staring in shop windows. This was when my mind started going. My dress sense went out the window. I started wearing some tie-dyed kaftans, I thought it gave people nice colours to look at. I was wrong. I was also trying to get fit by drinking just wheatgrass, but still my weight just ballooned. That's when it happened.

Russel seems a little shaken, remembering this. He takes a swig of water and washes down a couple of Lexotan, a Portuguese anti-anxiety pill.

Russel: That's when I saw . . . *him*. The second time.

Murdoc: I . . . er . . . think we should drop this. Change the subject.

Russel turns to Murdoc.

Russel: No, man, I'm gonna tell him.

Murdoc: Fine, but you know what happens. It always freaks you out.

Murdoc's heard this before and knows what to expect. He stares out of the window. Russel pause and sips some more water, knocking back a gobful of Risperdal.

Russel: It was him. The face in the black hood from the Humvee years before, part of the gang that had killed Del. Here he was, stood in front of me now . . . The Grim Reaper. 9ft tall. Cloak, the big scythe. The whole get up. The cloak was just a swirling mass of black trouble. It looked . . . alive. And then I realised that it was made up of thousands upon thousands of black crows circling, flying around the Reaper.

Murdoc: I can't believe you're still on about the Grim Reaper following you. That's just nuts . . .

Russel: Yeah? Well I never showed you this, did I? It's a picture that a fan took of me and their friend out in L.A. Who's that in the background, Muds? Look familiar to you?

Russel passes Murdoc a Polaroid picture. Murdoc looks at it and his face drains of colour. Pale, he gulps.

Murdoc: Is . . . is that who I think it is?

Russel: As I said. It was the Grim Reaper. Then he turned. He looked right at me and I thought, 'That's it. My time's up'. The heat coming off this creature was intense. Like a blowtorch inches from my face. I thought I was gonna pass out or be sick.

Russel takes the photo out of Murdoc's shaking hand and places it back in his pocket.

Russel: I felt this incredible strain, like I was being turned inside out. Unbelievable. It felt like my soul was just being torn out of my middle. I could hear this . . . ripping sound, like a tree being wrenched out at the roots. The sound grew deafening, like a thousand screaming infants. Then suddenly . . . it stopped. Silence.

ABOVE
Russel Hobbs, with a fan on Sunset Boulevard, LA
'Third time lucky, eh, Hobbsy?'

I opened my eyes real slowly. And there on the sidewalk in front of me lay this . . . stuff. Shiny, wet . . . in the shape of a figure. This big mass of . . . ectoplasm was just lying right in front of me. Then . . . it moved, and got up. And I could see it was . . . it was Del! My life-long soul-brother. Del, the spirit who lived inside me, who rapped on 'Clint Eastwood'. Outside of me!! DEL!!!

Russel's eyes are wide open, as he relieves the nightmare.

Russel: He turned to me, the look on his face I'll never forget, and then he sort of looked down, and just said, 'I gotta go. I knew that sooner or later he'd come. Y'know, you can't hide from him forever.' Del had taken refuge inside me since he died in the drive-by shooting. But it was now time for him to go to his proper resting place. He gave me one last hug, and then that was it.

Russel leans in close to the others and his voice lowers conspiratorially.

Russel: The Reaper wrapped his cloak around Del, and then they were both gone. A thin trail of vapour, and a smell of ash, burnt matches . . . then nothing.

Murdoc now laughs incredulously at this extraordinary tale.

Murdoc: And that's when things started going really bad, right?

Russel: I just stared at the shadow Del left on the pavement for hours, this weird shape on the sidewalk like a dusty negative in the shape of my friend. After that I must have passed out. When I came to there was a figure leaning over me. He seemed real familiar. He had a huge warm smile on his face and he asked if I was OK. Instantly I felt at ease for the first time in what seemed like ages. He put his hand out and helped me up. Then I recognised him. Ike Turner!

Murdoc turns to me, giving me a blank stare, a facial shrug.

Murdoc: Seriously, you couldn't make it up, could you?

Russel: He dusted me off, and he took me back to his place. He fed me, stuck some new clothes on my back and let me just rest. I was gone. Gone . . . I slept for a real long time.

Noodle: Down and Out in Osaka, Japan

Meanwhile, Noodle had undertaken a recuperative mission of her own and, of the four of them, her internal adventure was probably the most revelatory.

Noodle: When Murdoc left I realised I could no longer remain either. It was time for me to face myself and stare into the mystery of my past.

October 1st 2002 *Noodle vacates Mulholland Drive and returns to Osaka*

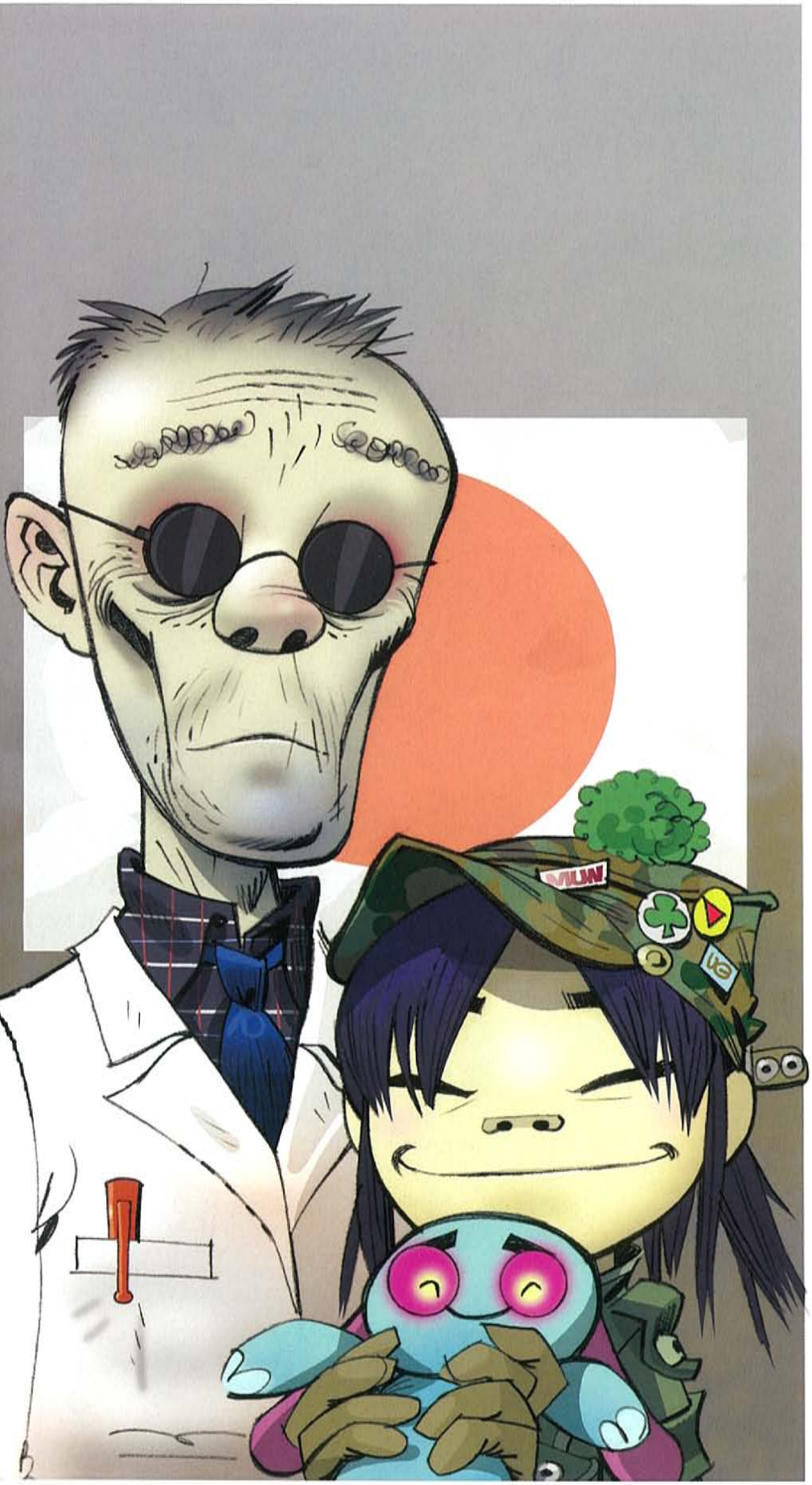
Noodle: It had been building up in me for a long while, probably before we went to LA. I think it was during the last tour that I began to be plagued by these silent nightmares and half-forgotten images. Things just flashing up in my head constantly. Images of army bases and . . . orders, and . . .

This condition I think escalated during the time we were making the film and the period spent in the house in Hollywood. You must remember, despite my centred worldliness, I still was only thirteen at the time, and my experiences since joining Gorillaz were a lot to take in. The fact that I could remember nothing of my past never seemed of importance before, but now from the depths of my subconscious, the questions were obviously beginning to re-surface. They kept on knocking, and the sound was getting louder.

Noodle throws her arms wide, displaying the size of her trouble.

Noodle: It grew and grew till soon every thought I had was of my homeland, of escape. Gorillaz was no longer a love affair, but a prison. Murdoc's breath, his face. The charm had worn off, as had the allure of the relentless pace of success. I needed to bathe in the light again. I needed to breathe air, opportunity and reassurance again. I needed to discover . . . the truth.

BELOW
Noodle in capsule hotel, Tokyo, 2002



Having arrived at Nakita airport, Tokyo, once more, the teenage Noodle was at a loss as to where to begin.

Noodle: As I had no real idea where to go or what to look for, I was potentially lost, but somehow my soul was becoming lighter because I knew that this quest was the correct and right journey to make. I was travelling between Tokyo and Osaka searching for clues. However, I had nowhere to stay so I used a capsule hotel in central Tokyo as my base. I ran up quite a bill.

For almost a year I trawled the city streets; Osaka, Tokyo, Kyoto . . . I spent much time at America Mura. I even went to the film studios in Kyoto where they make the samurai films. At points it felt as if I was getting closer. People would give me unusual looks, odd glances. Different to the normal stares I just get for being the guitarist of Gorillaz. I followed rumours and whispers of secret army bases and crack miniature military troops! These snatches of stories seemed to . . . stir something within me.

But every time Noodle felt she was getting nearer to unveiling this mystery the trail would evaporate. Close to giving up, with her patience waning to the point of retirement, her riddle was finally solved when the answer walked right into her.

Noodle: I was in a steamed fish shop, one of the open restaurants of downtown Tokyo. I was sitting down by the booth and as one of the waiters came out I accidentally knocked over a tray of freshly cooked 'Ocean Bacon!' 'Ocean . . . BACON?!?!' It all came back to me. Like being suddenly pulled up out of the deep water and into bright clear daylight! This unique and unlikely combination of words had triggered a flashback of colossal consequence. I remembered . . . everything!

Murdoc looks round at Noodle, as if his memory has also been re-awoken.

Murdoc: Ocean Bacon? Sounds like the name of a horse I put a bet on. Did it win?

Noodle: Suddenly, out of the kitchen, the chef appeared, to see what had happened . . . and it was my mentor and trainer, the army officer Mr Kyuzo!

Mr Kyuzo was as surprised and overwhelmed to see his former charge as Noodle was to see him. They caught up fast and Mr Kyuzo revealed to Noodle the truth of her past.

Noodle: This was when I discovered the reasoning behind my memory loss. Mr. Kyuzo revealed to me that I was one of 23 children trained as part of an elite crack team for the Japanese government at a secret military compound! I had been placed in Kyuzo's custody from birth and raised under his strict guidance. It was Mr Kyuzo's duty to train the children in every martial art, including sonic warfare. He taught us all languages, including sign and lip-reading. Computers, mechanics, Gameboys . . .

Murdoc: Yarn-spinning?

Noodle: It was here that I also re-discovered my ability to speak English. Along with my other gifts, it was something that had been wiped from my memory. Our skills and talents were endless. He also gave every child a special individual skill of their own. I was taught as a musician, my specialized instrument was guitar, but I became completely fluent in all instruments. But the real purpose of our training was as a junior fighting militia and a covert attack weapon!

You don't say.

Noodle: The destruction that we could cause when activated was devastating. Godzilla destroyed Tokyo maybe 100 times, but this was nothing compared to what we could do when activated. Like a miniature atom bomb! It was ingenious! Who would suspect it from such innocent faces? There was a secret password to activate us at the appropriate time, and also passwords to wipe our minds in case we were ever to be caught by the enemy. 'Ocean Bacon' was the password that was used to re-install all of our memories!!

2D: The chances of someone saying that accidentally must be very small. I can see why they chose that.

Murdoc (groaning): Oh for the love of –

Noodle: Before the children were ever used in a real battle situation, they were deemed too dangerous, too volatile. The tests were abandoned and Mr. Kyuzo was ordered to cease all operations immediately. He then discovered an envoy had been dispatched by the Government to 'de-commission' all of the kids. This, he was informed, would mean destroying any evidence of their existence . . . including the children themselves!

OPPOSITE
Noodle with her mentor and trainer 'Mr Kyuzo'

BELOW
Noodle, a zen master of guitar

RAN

Therefore, for her own safety, Mr Kyuzo smuggled the young Noodle to England.

Noodle: He said that I was such a magnificent guitar player I should seek my livelihood as a musician. He sent me via FedEx to the original Gorillaz audition. He wiped my memory of everything other than my music skills and then sent me packing! That is how I came to be in Gorillaz!

2D: Oh! So that's why you arrived in the box! I get it now.

Noodle: Mr Kyuzo assumed, judging by the previous international success of other British bands, that I would be able to perform for some time in relative obscurity.

Murdoc: Who would have guessed, eh?

Noodle: After he told me all this I pieced together my history. And I realised it was now the correct time to return back home. I remembered the real importance of my training and my mission . . . I returned to Kong Studios to complete my unfinished business immediately.

2D: Awright, Darling!

Well, this is all a bit grim. Fortunately 2D's experience wasn't nearly so dense.

2D: Yeah! I actually had a brilliant time. After Noodle and Murdoc left I just carried on where we left off. Not on the script. That would have been stupid. Nah, I hung around in LA for a while, mainly with that Brian Setzer of 'Stray Cat Strut' fame. He's a good laugh. I became a member of the Viper Room club, where all the celebs hang out. Bit weird there but, yeah, it was fun.

It was through Brian that 2D met Britt Ekland.

2D: Yeah, she's lovely. I fancied her since Murdoc lent me his copy of 'The Wicker Man'. Russel was acting all weird, so I gave Britt Ekland a call, and she said 'Come on over!'

Murdoc's glaring at 2D. It's obviously a sore point for Murdoc, as he's always fancied Britt Ekland and 2D's basically rubbing Murdoc's nose in it.

2D: Yeah, I stayed round at Britt Ekland's flat in LA for a month or two.

2D is looking at Murdoc out of the corner of his eye.

2D: But after a while I just had enough of LA. Britt was just wandering around with her backside out, naked, banging on the walls all night, and there's some other idiot playing a wooden flute in the other room. When they started building that massive wicker statue I just thought, 'You know what? I've had enough of all this. I'm going home, back to my Dad's place.' What can you do in that situation other than make like a banana and split?

November 25th 2002 *2D returns to England*

2D decided, as Noodle did, to return to his homeland. He went back to England, back home to see his dad who was now running the fun fair down in Eastbourne. His dad gave 2D a job collecting the money on the 'Switchback Ride'. This simple but repetitive task gave 2D a whole new sense of job satisfaction.

ABOVE
2D plus pals, 'Tusspot's Fairground', Eastbourne

Hopping from carriage to carriage, chatting up the local talent, these were the happiest days of 2D's life. He also became good mates with Shane Lynch, a former member of the 19th century boyband Ex-Boyzone. Shane now took the money on The Wurlitzer.

The pair became inseparable, working the rides by day and cruising the town by night. Adopting the teddy boy look with drainpipe jeans and his hair slicked into a greasy quiff, 2D became a local celebrity all over again; the star of the dodgems, and King of the Carousel!

2D: Coming home was, like, a revelation. The good old days all over again, like being a teenager, but, like, with all the brains and front of being a grown-up. I hooked up with Shane and me and him just sort of took Eastbourne over. We was both working at my old man's fairground, and y'know, a couple of free rides on The Waltzer and girls would be all over you. So I had a brilliant time. I even dug my old Subutteo stuff out.

2D quickly became fascinated with Shane Lynch's hobby, Monster Trucks.

2D: Shane Lynch was like a big brother to me. He's well into Monster Trucks, so I got into them too. He's sound, man. He's got this Dodge truck which is massive. He let me have a go on his Big Foot too. Now that really is a monster truck!

Shane Lynch, Ex-Boyzone: That's right 2D. Big Foot, now that's where monster trucks originated from, in the world.

Shane Lynch, the UK's top professor of Monster Truckology, explained further ...

Shane Lynch: See D, Big Foot was designed in America originally. It was the first kind of truck which brought to public knowledge what could be done to crush cars and excitement and entertainment and that kind of stuff, before they brought them into racing. It kind of originated from swamp racing, which is where they use big tyres, so these machines wouldn't sink.

2D: Who makes them now?

Shane Lynch: There's no manufacturer who makes Big Foot, D. It's something that some nutters in their garage decide that they want to make it bigger and better and they get these wheels that usually come off artics. Artic lorries. Some tyres come off of tractors or come off of some kind of plant machinery . . . and then they stick 'em on a road-going machine.

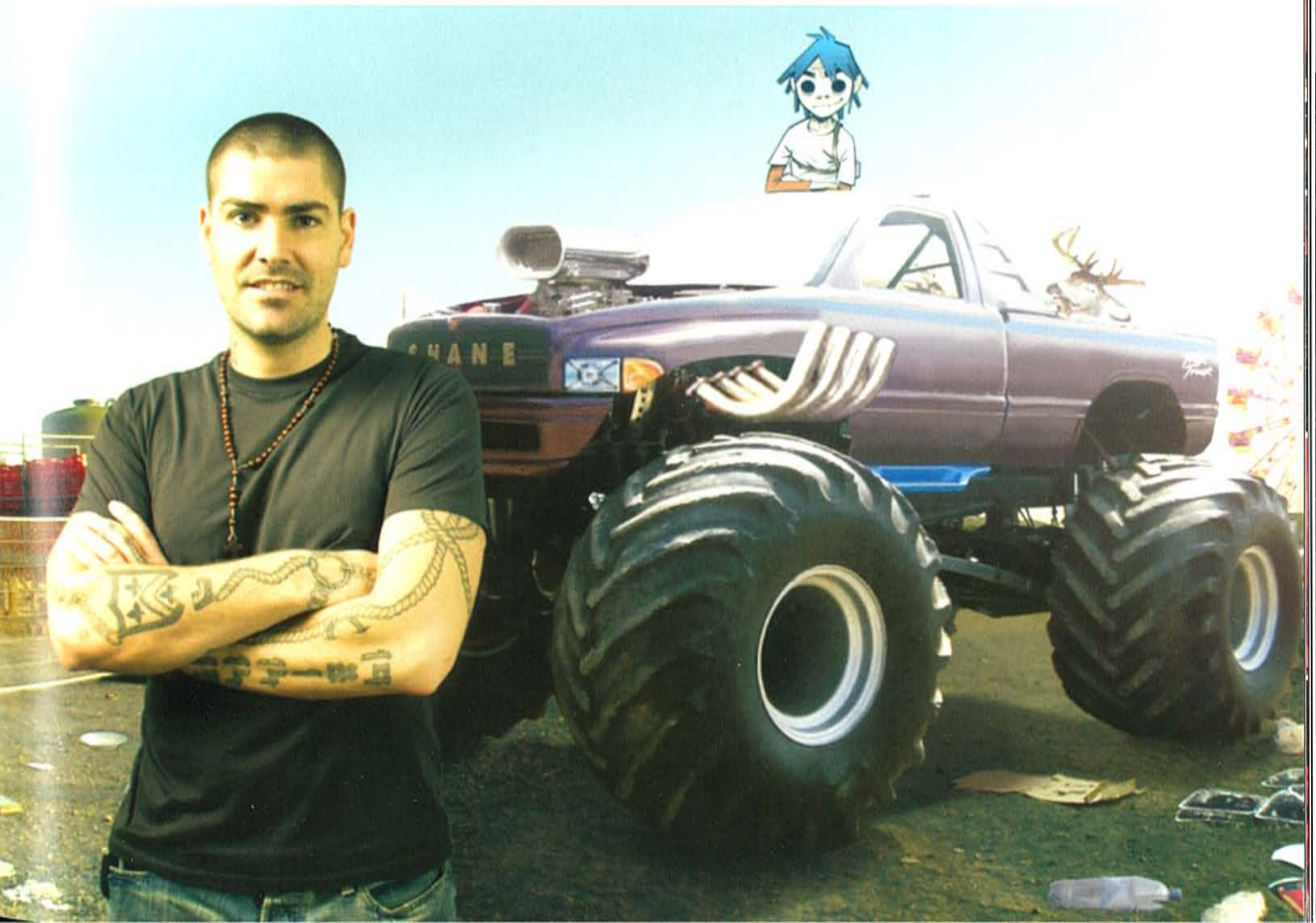
2D: Plant machinery?

Shane Lynch: Yeah. So you can take any – it doesn't even have to be a truck, actually – you can take anything you like at this point, but people used to use Toyotas and Dodges or Fords. But you can use pretty much any kind of pick-up truck and put 'em up on big wheels. Jack 'em up, basically.

2D: Anyway, as I said, Shane taught me loads about trucks . . . So that was it. I didn't really think too much about Gorillaz around that time. I was happy just knocking around Eastbourne with Lynchy. Top geezer!

What's more, with no Murdoc around to bully him, 2D quickly got his own ego back. And then some. His big-head soon swelled right out of control as he realized that it was him, 2D, who was responsible for the Gorillaz' success. Great! He was still just as dim as always, but now thought the sun shone out of his own posterior. So 2D, 'Stu-Pot', the skinny greaser hardnut, had gone from boy to man. Packet of three, a fresh roll-up and a flick-comb. He's set.

BELOW
Shane Lynch and 2D
'I think Shane whipped those tyres off a jumbo jet' 2D



Chapter 8
Live Tonight: Zombies! Death! Disease! Tequila!

'O Green World
Don't desert me now
Bring me back to a fallen town
Where someone is still alive

O Green World
Don't desert me now
Made of you and you of me
But where are we?
Oh no'

October 27th 2003 *Noodle returns to Kong*

Noodle: It had been one and a half years since any of Gorillaz had been at the Kong Studios. I returned to the building towards the end of 2003 and the first thing I noticed was the thunderstorms, the clouds and the lightning. The weather was unchanged.

On entering the abandoned mansion she discovered something far more upsetting than the drizzly climate. What was once a well-equipped studio on a hilltop in Essex had in Gorillaz' absence degenerated into a terrifying horror-filled house of blood, guts and infestation by zombies. Death, disease and the undead roamed the corridors and enclaves of the studios.

ABOVE
Noodle and monkey, outside Kong Studios, late 2002
'Our electric bills are absolutely enormous'
MURDOC NICCALS

Noodle: A shocking disease had occupied our abandoned home. A disease that climbed the walls, stalked the corridors and blocked the drains. It would appear that without a cleaner, the rotten spirit of Kong was manifesting itself in a very physical form. The flesh-craving undead beings had to be stopped!

The young warrior Noodle, although shocked and scared, cut a path through the flesh-seeking automatons, and sealed herself in the Kong Studios TV room. The building was now a concrete battlefield for these shambling, rotting corpses.

Noodle: It was here that I discovered the source of the infection. The TV room was what these mindless automatons were heading for, craving. They bashed on the doors, continually attempting to gain entry. They were . . . feeding on whatever it was that was coming out of these television sets!

It took Noodle six months to completely clear the Kong Studios of the shuffling zombies, and make it safe to use the building again. Equipped with her flame-throwers and zombie-proofed suit, discovered in a bunker room, Noodle would undertake a daily extermination regime before retreating to the relative security of the TV room.

Noodle: It was while in this situation, walled up in the TV room, that I discovered the real state of danger.

Now that Noodle understood English, she used this time to research the state of the world and the condition of global culture. As the multiple television sets flickered out an endless stream of useless info, made-up history, soul-sapping celebrities and time-rotting garbage, the evidence was all there. Subliminal drivel! Talent shows, game shows, reality shows. The disease was spreading.

Noodle: The infection was in the airwaves, the radiowaves and the television broadcasts. Something was eating away at our planet. The infection was now in Kong, and if I didn't fight it . . . the infection would be inside me.

This parade of uselessness was relentlessly depressing and utterly alienating. I felt so alone. I began to feel that I was the only thinking, feeling being left. I needed to make something that worked as a signal to others, that brought the good and the light back in to the world, to me, to balance the darkness. It was important to light a torch for abandoned souls.

During this time I began sketching out what would become 'Demon Days'. I just made song notes, ideas for rhythms and melodies onto my Tascam four-track. And I think the isolation of the studio, my understanding of the potential disaster faced by the world, its behaviour and the unrelenting stream of babble that I could see on the TV screens tuned into stations all around the world, all of these combined into themes that became the album.

2D, whilst listening intently to this terrifying story, has been quietly playing with Noodle's Tamagotchi toy.

2D: Er . . . So, you know those passwords? The ones that Mr Kyuzo gave you? What happened to them? You can't let those fall into the wrong hands. Japanese children exploding like bombs? That would be terrible!

Noodle pats her top pocket.

Noodle: Regarding the secret passwords, I keep them close to my chest in an envelope at all times. I made a very solemn promise to Mr Kyuzo that I would never reveal stage three of my mission until the time is right.

2D returns his attention to Noodle's virtual pet.

2D: Oh. Noodle, your Tamagotchi pet's died again. It's turned into an angel.

She grabs it off him. Noodle looks at 2D in silent rage.

ABOVE
Noodle writing demos for 'Demon Days'
'That monkey smokes too much' NOODLE

Meanwhile, Back in Hobbstown . . .

March 40th 2003 *Ike Turner's basement, Russelville*

Down in Mr Turner's basement, the mad mountain Russel Hobbs was slowly but surely returning to his senses.

ABOVE
Russel Hobbs, Ike Turner's basement
'Ike can see clearly now Russel's mind has gone'
MURDOC NICCALS

OPPOSITE
Russel battles music in the fourth dimension

Russel: The days turned into weeks, months maybe. Gradually I felt the desire to make some music again. Ike gave me some instruments and an old eight-track machine, and we just started working on some tracks together. I became filled with a passion to create a new record, a new music; something that would match the inspired heights of the classics. A hip hop 'Sgt. Peppers', a breakbeat 'Pet Sounds'! The working title for the album was 'The Seventh Heaven Hip Hop and Harmony Album'. It was meant to be so full of good vibrations, warm harmonies, and great sounds that the whole world would just come together in a mutual sense of love and universal respect for each other. But . . . it . . . it . . . took an odd turn.

Like Syd Barrett's 'Opel' or Alexander Skip Spence's 'Oar', Russel's album had the makings of a left field crackpot classic. But the gentle if eccentric melodies became twisted in the mix. Oi! Nutjob! What the hell happened?

Russel: It all went bad. Evil. It just ended up with a life of its own. And there was a sickly gloop coming out of the speakers. I could tell the album had gone sour. You could hear people laughing in the background. It sounded like some wonky David Koresh tape, all panpipes and meditation chants, but it was like the sound was trying to . . . lull you into a dream-like state, so it could eat your soul. Really spooky. Like a children's nursery rhyme from some horror film.

2D perks up at the mention of horror films.

2D: Was it like 'Amityville'? Or maybe one of those 'Nightmare on Elm Street' jobs? 'Halloween'? Oh! Maybe it sounded like 'Children of the Corn'?

Russel ignores him and continues. Having his trauma trivialized by a zombie afficionado clearly carries no weight with him.

Russel: I got the impression that everything that was going wrong in the world was down to this dark energy that was coming out of this record. It was a balancing act trying to work and keep my psychosis at bay. I lost count of the amount of times I saw little pink animals marching across the mixing desk, blowing trumpets and bashing cymbals together. I miked one of them up once. That sounded incredible. I've got the tape here somewhere.

Murdoc shakes his head.

Murdoc: Pop another Xanax, Russ.

Russel: The songs, though, were taking on a life of their own. I could see ectoplasm leaking out of the speakers. Sometimes, pounds of cherry stones would shoot out. I thought that everything that was going wrong in the world was down to this music I was making. Maybe the bass was too heavy, maybe the beat was too strong. So I had to pull the thing down. Shelve it, hide it from the world. I didn't trust the album any more, so I buried the tapes underground, but I could still hear them pounding away for months afterwards. That's when I came back to England, to Kong Studios, to rest again. Just get away from . . . everything.

Murdoc: And Bingo! Surprise, surprise . . . . Noodle's working on the new Gorillaz album! So it all worked out Hunky Dory for big Russel, then. Next question.

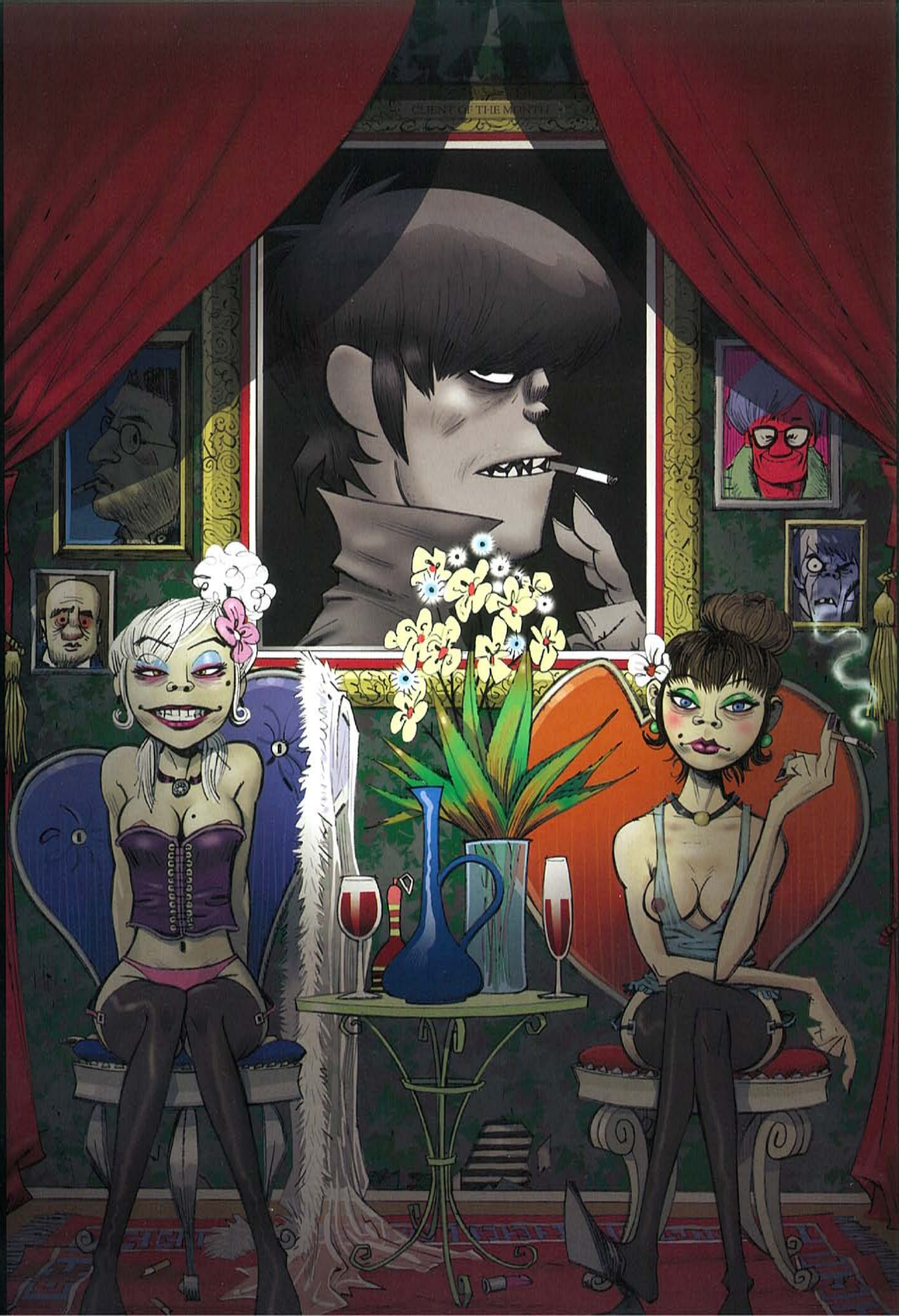
Russel: It's difficult. Del was – in a very real way – my soulmate for so long. Having him removed from me like that, by the Grim Reaper . . . It took me a long while to find out just who the real Russel Hobbs was after that.

Russel looks rattled. A thousand yard stare cast upon his face. He's right back there in the thick of it again.

Murdoc (sighs): I'm going down the shops to get some milk. Anybody want anything?

The draft demos Noodle had begun making in the others' absence were now reaching their fruition, and would soon require the input of the other members.

Noodle: I spent six months inside the blacked-out shell of Kong. Eventually I had a template of what I thought would be a relevant album for Gorillaz to construct. It was time for the others to return and contribute their parts. And coincidentally, that is when they did begin returning . . . With the first album we had established the seeds of ideas, ambitions. But without any support or follow-up, the young sprouts of inspiration would have withered and died. Therefore, it was time to reunite the band and launch another Gorillaz assault.



Jailbreak!

OPPOSITE
'Nothing about this says "brothel" to me'
MURDOC NICCALS

Still in the Mexican cell, Murdoc Niccals decided to do something useful with his time. Donning a pair of brainy-looking spectacles, he hit the library and boned up on something constructive.

Murdoc: So, did I use my time productively? Well I like to think so. I worked out, I wrote lyrics, I made phone calls. Did an Open University Course. 'Amateur Administration of Pharmaceutical Medicines'. And I even passed a medical exam. I'm Dr Niccals now. I tell you, if I need anything over *or* under the counter, I can write my own prescriptions now. 'What's it for sir?' 'Whatever I want it for. I'm a bleedin' GP.'

Christ! Really? *'Dr Murdoc'* ?!

Murdoc: Yup! Niccals M.D. 'Legally entitled to experiment on monkeys'. That's me.

No!!

Murdoc: Oh, yes.

Murdoc also got himself some prison ink.

Murdoc: Namely, I got some tattoos. I got the seven deadly sins tattoos right across my back. 'Lust', 'Pride' and 'Gluttony' are probably my favourites. Still, as I said, there's not a great deal to do when you're sitting in jail.

In the Mexican jail, Murdoc's patience, like his ability to stomach prison food, was wearing thin.

Murdoc: I had to get out of that place. I'd heard some very interesting news, via a couple of cellmates, and it was obvious that a situation had arisen that wouldn't wait . . .

February 28th 2004 *Murdoc exits the jail*

Murdoc: I just thought 'Time's Up!' After eighteen months and with no sign of parole in sight, I decided to bust out of jail! Parlophone wanted a new album and I wanted my new advance!

How did you escape?

Murdoc: Oh, I built a papier-mâché version of myself using newspapers and some 'Welcome To Mexico' brochures. Then I put it in the bed. I recorded a tape loop of me moaning, so the jailers would think I was just having a bad morning. I copied this trick off one of the duff films 2D was watching on the flight over to Japan. It worked though. They probably still think I'm hungover in bed as we speak.

Murdoc's porridge in the correctional facility did little or nothing to rehabilitate him.

Murdoc: Y'know, I hate those 'I did time and now I realise the error of my ways'-type confessionals. Balderdash. I tell you, soon as I came out I went straight back to the exact same place and did the whole thing all over again. This time when the cops burst out the cupboards all they found was a box of Milk Tray and a card saying *'Adiós, mis amigos. Usted*

nunca me tomará vivo' which is Mexican for *'See you later, ssssuckers!'* I grabbed my crap and then jumped straight onto a plane back to England. Reformed character? Piss off.

After that last lightning visit to 'The Chicken Choker', Murdoc was on a plane back to the belly of his beloved Kong Studios! With his raven and new Mexican pals in tow, this motley crew were ready to shake their stupid maracas all over the next record.

Murdoc: It was a miracle that our record label managed to keep the whole incident out of the press, but then the next thing we know, some idiot actually wrote it up as a part of our biography, and sent it out to all the papers. Can you believe it? Still, it was good to be heading back home. I grabbed a bottle of tequila and a couple of sombreros as a memento then that was it. Hold on baby, I'm coming back! Home sweet home.

March 3rd 2004 *Murdoc Niccals arrives back at Kong Studios*

With his bad-boy credentials now complete, courtesy of the Mexican penal system, arthritic booze-monkey Murdoc had elevated his repulsiveness into uncharted regions. He must be very proud of himself.

Eastbourne to Essex: Tickets Please!

Despite having a wicked time down at the funfair, thought-like feelings started to form in 2D's hollow head, and gradually he realized that he should return to Kong and find out what was happening.

When he received a text message from Noodle announcing that she had completed demos, and would he mind putting some singing on them, he knew it was time. He gave Shane a big hug and then took the train from Eastbourne to Essex, back to his hilltop hangout.

BELOW
2D with flicknife
'That's for getting stones out of horses' hooves, or summfin'' 2D

2D: I started thinking about Noodle, about Russel, my mates. Gorillaz ain't something you can just walk away from, so I came back to do my vocals on the album. I saw Murdoc walking in just before me armed to the teeth with duty-free tequila, sombreros and with his two Mexican mates not far behind.

March 3rd 2004 *2D arrives back at Kong Studios*

His confidence fully restored 2D decided to –

2D: . . . like, sort that duh-brain Murdoc out, for picking on me! Give him a kicking or summink! I wouldn't leave Noodle and Russel to deal with Murdoc on their own.

Murdoc (sneers): Oh yeah! Big difference it makes having you around to help them.

CATCH-23

ABOVE
A whoop of Gorillaz, 2004
'Er, 2D. You do realize your thumb's poking right out the front of your jeans?'
MURDOC NICCALS

Murdoc takes a last puff on his cigarette, then flicks the end at 2D. It bounces off his nose. The hot embers scatter.

2D: Ow!

March 3rd 2004 *Russel Hobbs arrives back at Kong*

Lastly, half an hour after the rest of the gang, mental man-mountain Russel stumbled in, looking like a crazy cross between Isaac Hayes and David Bellamy. All jaws dropped wide open.

Murdoc: Russel had gained another 200 pounds. He looked like a blow-up version of the original Russel. Kinda freaked me out a bit at first. When he shook my hand it felt like being in the grip of a jumbo pack of economy sausages. He was looking pretty crazy. In fact his head was swimming so much I could see the stars flying round it.

Russel: Hmmm . . .

So the fun-loving foursome are finally re-united, dragged inexorably back to the hub of the horribly haunted hell-hole, and each with their own story to tell. Noodle lost no time updating them on the grievous situation they were in, and a swift breakdown of the most relevant points of their forthcoming mission. Obviously, it all went in one ear, straight out the other. A drunk, a dim-wit and a crazy man is a hard way to start a revolution.

Russel: Kong Studios. It's like walking into a cold morgue sometimes. It feels like someone or something's just watching us the whole time.

2D: That'll probably be the cameras we've got scattered about the place.

Murdoc: But it didn't take long to settle back into the same routine. Y'know, zombies, death, breakdowns, phantoms, paranoia and a bunch of hit singles. Being in a band, eh . . . Wicked!

OK. Enough. There's a new album to record.

Chapter 9
The Making of 'Demon Days'

'Picture I'm a dreamer
I'll take you deeper
Down to the sleepy glow
Time is a low
Don't you know
What are we going to do?'

Who put the chemicals in the foodchain?

'We live in a shockingly beautiful world. We are walking through the living kingdom of heaven every day; the colours, the sound, the love of others, the potential to create, the plants, wildlife, nature, music, all sensations and life . . . but if we refuse to see colour and beauty we may as well be in Hell. Maybe an animated band was the best way of announcing this.' NOODLE, GUITARIST OF GORILLAZ

With heads still reeling from the experiences of the last two years, the foursome decided to waste no time in committing the odd sensations down to tape. Noodle played the other Gorillaz her demos and the praise for these initial visions was unanimously glowing.

Russel: Incredible! It was such a leap forward; a whole bigger, deeper, darker vision. More cohesive, more considered. It was looking right around the world. I mean, there was a huge amount of work to do in order to make this record, but you could see that where we were going to go was really interesting.

2D: The melodies that she'd sung worked way better for me than the first album. I was really looking forward to putting these down. It was, like, totally different to the first album. Well I guess it would be. Noodle wrote it.

Noodle: The birth of 'Demon Days' appeared to me on a train travelling from Beijing to the Mongolian capital of Ulan Bator, as I returned from Japan to Kong. As I was travelling across Northern China, I suddenly realized that there was nothing there. It was partly because of the encroaching desertification coming from the Gobi desert, but also because of the incredible amount of over-farming. It had disappeared . . . the land had disappeared!

All that was left were deserted plains with a constant cold wind and trees with paper bags and old toilet rolls for hundreds of miles. Litter trees. There may have been the odd vulture or peasant scratching in the dirt, but nothing else. I went to sleep very troubled by what I'd seen; the realization of the consequences of our actions. My dreams were dark and full of powerful, rattling winds that night.

And then I awoke and it was a beautiful sunny day! A beautiful blue sky, golden desert everywhere and camels. The darkness had been lifted, and the brightness, the light, had once again returned. The beauty was again revealed.

ALBUM 3?

This journey is what inspired the origins of the record; the idea of the world falling to pieces. This journey with its nocturnal trauma and terrors, and shrouds of darkness became a voyage that the album would also have to make. Hopefully we could steer the music through the mire to a brighter dawn and then finally on to the album's ultimate destination, as I too had arrived; when I woke up in the Gobi desert. Hope.

Murdoc: The new songs were alright, you know? Not bad for a first attempt. It's a shame I was in jail, though, or I would've given her a hand. But it was fantastic to get my hands back on my bass after all that time. I plugged it in, cranked the amp up to 13 and let it rippppp!!! Sweet, glorious sounds!! The joy!!!

Russel: It was important, almost unspoken; nothing in our individual lives had made any sense, nothing worked without music. Music was the key, why we formed, why we fought, why we came back together. It's our language. Everything else is secondary. Without a doubt, that's what brought us back together. Music is the King.

Secretly, every single member was jubilant to be rejoined with their colleagues, and returned back to their proper place as a musician.

Noodle: Early on, even though I could see that the songs I had chosen to work on had great potential, at that stage they lacked that certain life, and still required that spark of electricity that transforms a great song into something that has a magical life of its own.

It was decided to bring in a producer at an earlier stage than they had done with the recording of the first album. Dan 'The Automator' Nakamura would not be taking the helm the second time around.

Murdoc: Russel says that Dan retired from the project because he was freaked out by all the spirits in Kong Studios. Like an old and dusty DJ's needle, Dan just picked up too much of the fluff that was flying around. But if you're a sensitive producer, hey, that's what's gonna happen.

Russel: I think something about the Kong Studios building kinda crept into his soul and freaked him out a little. Hence why he passed the producer's crown over to Danger Mouse for this record.

Murdoc: He's probably hiding in one of the corridors somewhere, ready to jump out on us at any moment.

2D: Yeah, I did hear him say something about wanting to kick your ass.

A decision needed to be made regarding the production role. Murdoc's suggestion of drafting in hair metal guru and Shania Twain producer Mutt Lange was screwed up and put in the bin.

Noodle: I began thinking about the producer Danger Mouse. I was impressed with the work he had done on his own LP 'The Grey Album' which I had downloaded from the Internet during one of my late-night cultural reconnaissance missions. On 'The Grey Album', Danger Mouse had spliced together the Beatles' 'White Album' and Jay Z's 'Black Album', to create something brand new. It was his creative attitude and artistic bravery that I thought would work well with Gorillaz.

Murdoc: Oh yeah, 'The Grey Album'. Very good . . . once I got used to it. I thought at first there was, er . . . something wrong with my hi-fi. I could hear two records playing at once. Then I realized what Danger Mouse had done. Very clever . . . very . . . er . . . modern.

Noodle: So I called Parlophone record label and left specific instructions: 'I want Danger Mouse to produce the next Gorillaz album.'

The call was put out to try and track down the elusive mouseman.

Murdoc: She could see immediately Danger Mouse had the right sensibility, a full head of hair and the correct set of musical balls.

Russel: However, Danger Mouse had other plans. Firstly, spending all the big bucks he made off 'The Grey Album', commuting via Lear jet between his hi-tech Beverley Hills Playboy-Palace and his new monogrammed DM Island. Secondly, he was also busy planning his next big production escapade. 'The 23 Album' was set to be a full-colour fusion of Pearl Jam's 'Ten' and Blur's 'Thirteen'... Hmmm.

Noodle: But eventually we managed to persuade him to come to Kong, through a long and persistent process of blackmail, midnight phone calls and sincere pledges of artistic intent.

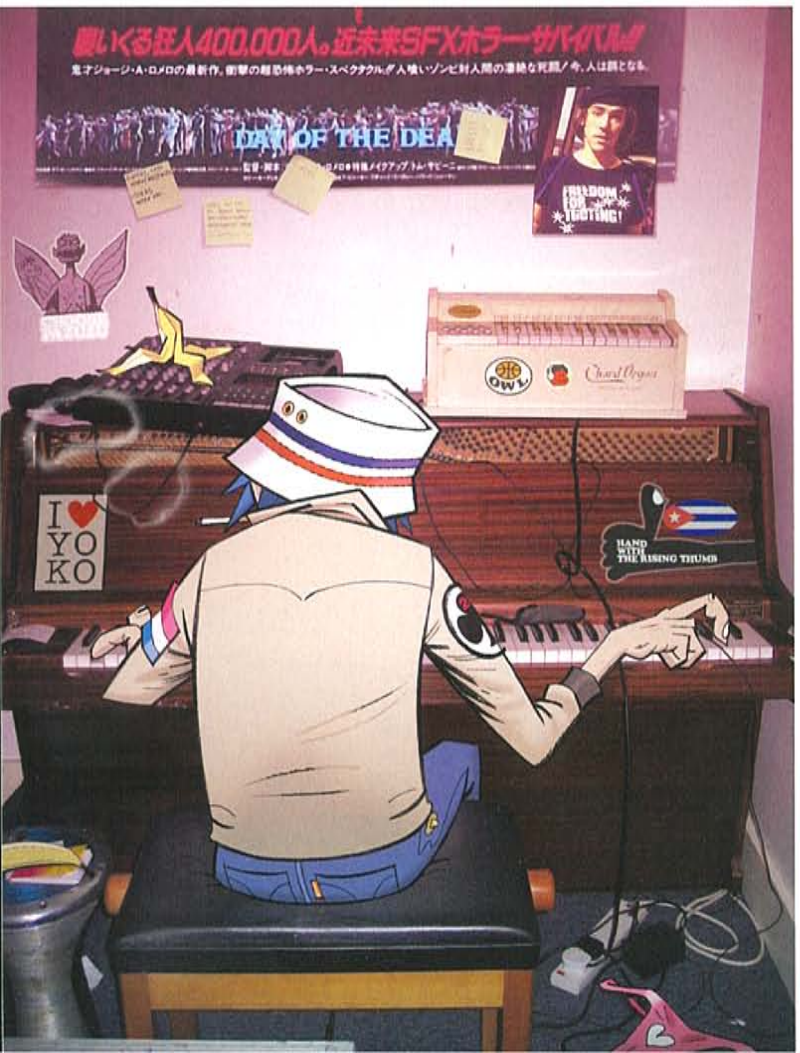
April 7th 2004 *Danger Mouse arrives at Kong Studios*

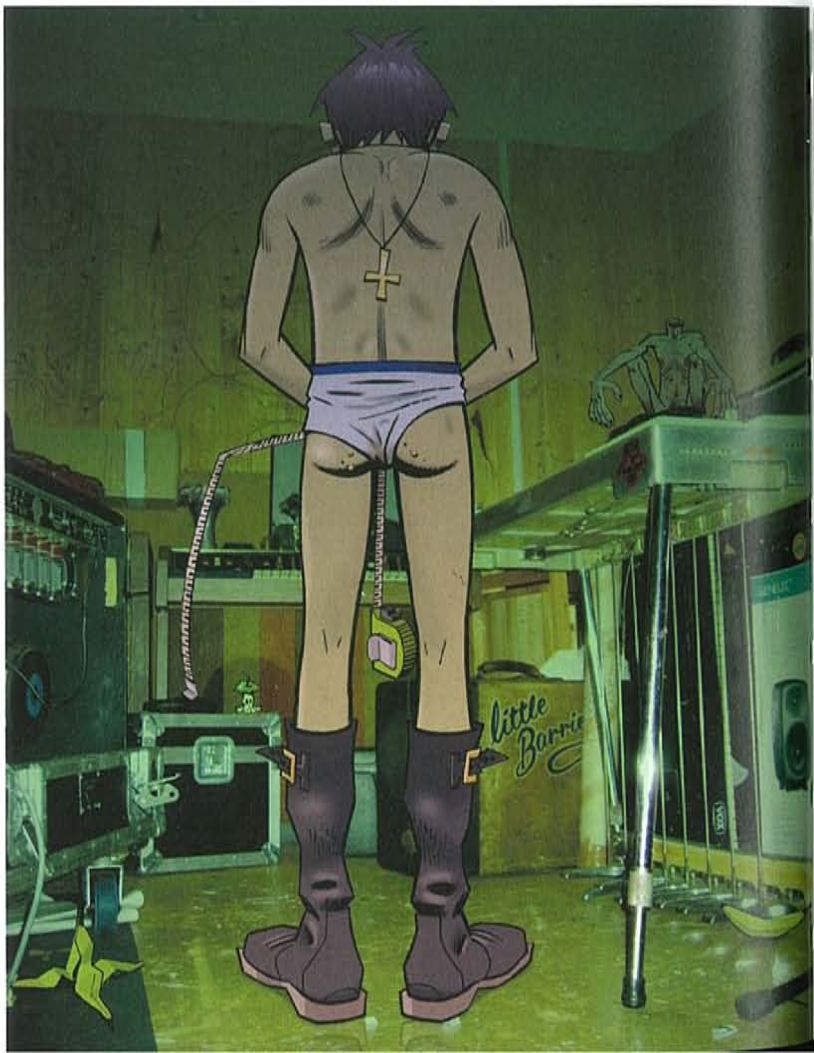
Russel: However, once he was here, true to form, Murdoc made the job unbearable, groaning or making loud quacking noises while Danger Mouse was listening back to the recordings.

Murdoc: Oh come on Russel. I was just making what I thought were valid contributions. It's a creative process.

Noodle and Danger Mouse discussed musical themes, narratives, shadows and shade far into the night. It was during this discourse that the concept of running the album as a journey was suggested. Their discussions also lead to the idea of dressing this musical backdrop with a vast cast of collaborative characters.

Noodle: For 'Demon Days', each and every person was chosen to appear for the particular attribute or texture, or aspect of culture they represent.





Russel: Dennis Hopper, the anti-establishment legend; De La Soul, the positive force of hip hop; Roots Manuva and Martina Topley-Bird, ethereal siblings . . . Ike Turner, the dark force of soul; Shaun Ryder, the most prodigal son, the voice of hedonistic funk and the pantomime villain; Bootie Brown, the conscious objector; Neneh Cherry, as the streetwise B-girl. These agents would all play parts against each other in the acts of 'Demon Days'.

Murdoc: Really? . . . I missed all of this. I'll have to listen to that record again one day.

Noodle: To my great pleasure, Danger Mouse decided to take on the job of producer. He took his hat and coat off, sterilized his hands and then we began. It was important to me to mark a transition in the life of Gorillaz. There were way bigger themes and issues at stake. The first album, however good, was a collection of disconnected songs. This time round I wanted each and every song to represent a chapter, moving forth the narrative in order to create a single and complete body of work. I wanted to take the conflicts and contrasts that had characterised the first Gorillaz record and integrate them into a cohesive, balanced whole.

To keep out any unwanted distractions the studio door of Kong was securely bolted, with all recordings being held secret until the relevant moments. This would further ensure that the tracks did not become contaminated by any floating bacteria, sprites or dirty brown viruses. The other Gorillaz were drafted in as and when the songs required their input.

Gorillaz collaborator Damon Albarn, smelling the gorgeous aroma of another great album in the making wafting throughout Essex, trundled up the Kong hillside to offer a helping hand. Always a guiding light with Gorillaz, Albarn supplied Noodle with an endless supply of soundtracks and musical references.

Noodle: Damon Albarn has been a great friend of Gorillaz right since our inception. He has always provided us with his musical opinion.

2D: Quite loudly sometimes.

Russel: Like Danger Mouse, he's a genuine music lover, and his input has always been valued; suggestions for collaborators, instruments, textures, harmonies . . .

Murdoc: Well, Damon gave 2D all that vocal coaching and now he sounds like he's doing an impression of Albarn's voice half the time. If we don't push the guy out the studio, we're gonna end up sounding like . . . I dunno . . . one of whatshischops's side projects. You know what I mean?

Russel: Both Damon and Danger Mouse gave us a lot of support in making this album. There's no way, despite the devastating skills that Gorillaz have as a band, that this album would have come out sounding as it does without the work that they did.

Damon brought with him two of his own studio technicians, Jason Cox and James Dring, who would further aid Noodle and Danger Mouse with programming, production and engineering duties. Little by little over months, the outline, shape and skeleton of the album began to materialize. From Noodle's original templates, various rhythms, sounds and textures were laid by Danger Mouse over these bare bones and then stitched into place.

Noodle: The late night sessions ran into early mornings as the album's creation gathered pace. Bigger, stranger instruments were hauled in for the recordings. What couldn't be found or didn't exist we had to build from scratch. We worked in various ways. Some songs started with the melody, some with just the rhythm, some came out of Gorillaz jams. Some of the tracks changed greatly from the original demos that I made.

Russel: Noodle and Danger Mouse formed a very close bond, their mutual creativity and vision locked in a kind of spiralling synchronicity. They both knew instinctively what would be needed in order to really pull out the right frequencies.

Murdoc: Every morning we would blindfold Danger Mouse, spin him round three or four times, push him towards the desk and then let him feel his way around the controls. It seemed to work.

Noodle: I think it was when Danger Mouse added the children's choir to the Gorillaz jam 'Dirty Harry' that we really began to see how this could work together. It was the combination of optimism and pessimism, dark and light, that opened up the gateway for all of us. Danger Mouse's production methods are very instinctive. Much akin to the young Luke Skywalker using 'the force'. He will find the soul of a song wherever it hides and coax it out. It is probably the most useful and integral skill a producer can have. To find a song's relevance and highlight that aspect. To remove the unnecessary parts.

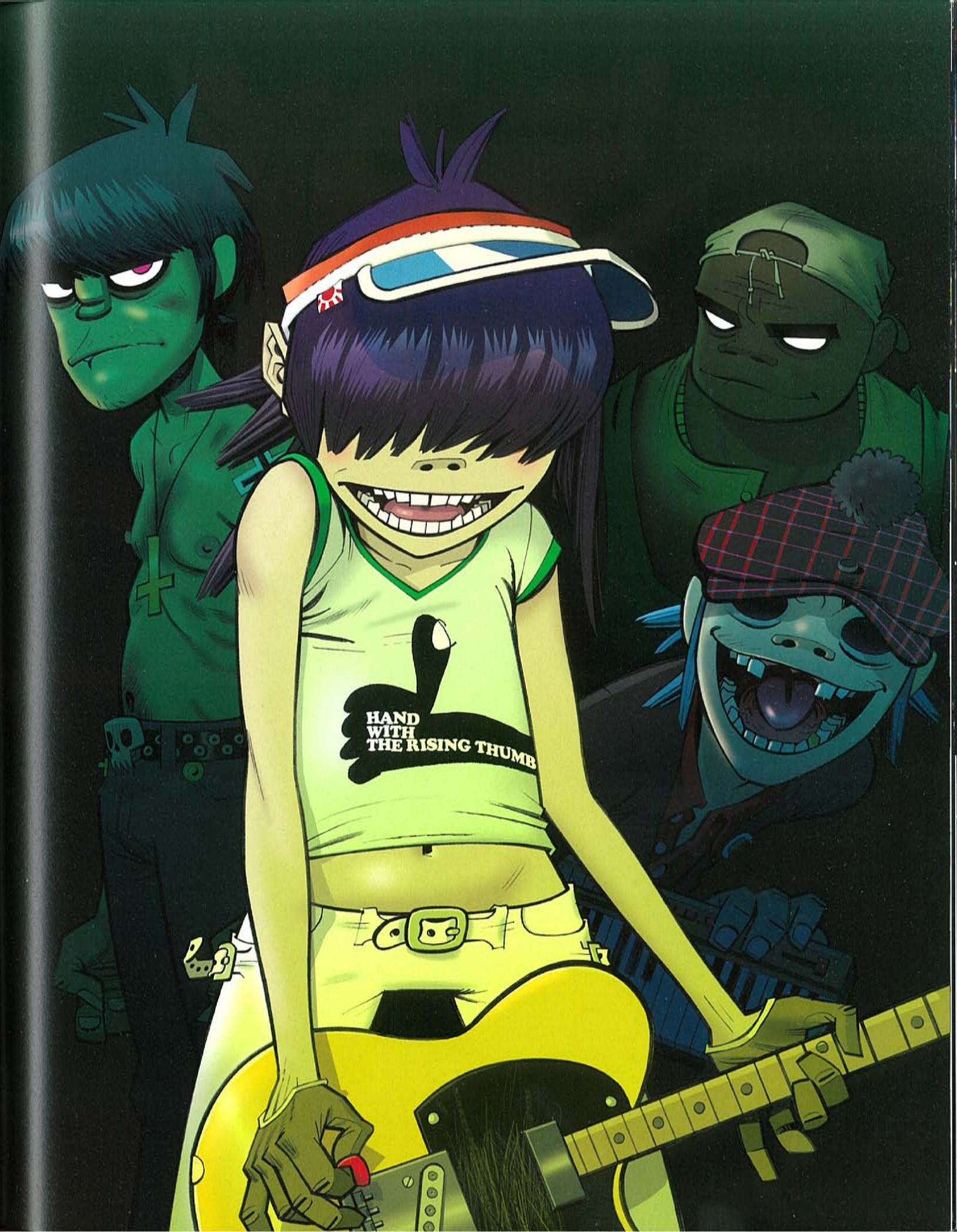
The wish-list of collaborators were contacted and arrangements made for their arrival.

Russel: Between us and Danger Mouse, the various musicians were drafted in to add extra vocals, sonics and energies to the album. He had the vision of an architect, and used these extra textures like a master builder. Each musician was used precisely to represent a specific part of the musical scenery. Initially, I think he wanted Ike Turner and Dionne Warwick to perform. This would be the greatest juxtaposition of black iconography you could put on record; a kind of light vs dark . . . but I think Ms. Warwick caught on to us.

Noodle: It also helps that Danger Mouse is very well-connected. It was through him that MF Doom and Bootie Brown came onto the record.

By choosing such an eclectic blend of characters and making them work together, it would reinforce the idea of a world of apparently conflicting contrasts combining to create a single, unified, overall picture.

This would be played out musically too, pitching Arabic strings against US rappers, soundtrack scores against hip hop beats, and damaged keyboards against Spanish acoustics and staccato strings. The histories of the guest contributors in the context of the music would further extend this idea.


HAND
WITH
THE RISING THUMB

BELOW
MF Doom

Russel: Almost as if the musicians were taking the roles of the elements they represented, playing up to the position of their perceived iconography,

Murdoc: Ike-onography?

Russel: Don't. (Pauses) What I was trying to say was that the Gorillaz' world could allow them to play or appear as the character, not caricature, or themselves; highlighting a whole new different vibrancy that they possess. Like taking a camera and shooting them from a different angle.

Noodle: If I am truthful, the sessions were pretty difficult. No one maintained our studio during our absence, so the place was just really run down. Getting anyone to come out to Essex and drive all the way up to the top of a hill with studio spares was nigh on impossible.

Russel: I can't even get a pizza delivered here.

Noodle: It is a mark of the dedication of the collaborators on 'Demon Days' that they each endured the trial of the ascent in order to record their pieces. There have also been prolonged power cuts, causing the studio to seize up and all the phone lines to die. Even though the dark energy of the building had left its heavy imprint on the music, the achievements of this musical document were undeniable.

One by one, the procession of musical collaborators marched up the hill. Bootie Brown, De La Soul, Neneh Cherry, Shaun Ryder, Roots Manuva, Dennis Hooper ... choirs, orchestras, zithers, lutists, mandolinists, tubas, steel drummers, fawns, rams, ngofarimen, raita players, harpists, harpies, bassoonists ... the path leading to Kong quickly became a well-worn trench lined with broken strings, feathers, discarded batteries and rosin.

Murdoc: Dennis Hopper drove his bike up the hill that Kong Studios is built on, kicked the doors down and then he rode his big filthy motorbike right into the heart of our studio. He left tyre tracks all over the studio floor. He spent about half an hour doing donuts round the mic stand, whooping and a-hollering and throwing his hat into the air.

Russel: But after that he settled down, had a cup of Earl Grey with lemon, and did the take. Nailed it in one, too.

Murdoc: We paid him in petrol. After he was done, I filled up his tank, and with a tip of the hat he roared off out the studio, down the hill and away. He said he was off to New Orleans ... to a Mardi Gras. And I remember the recording with Roots Manuva. He came into our studio busting all this South London 'Dr Seuss' shit. You could hear him coming a mile off, right from the bottom of the hill. Big 20ft giant of a man. He was about an hour late. 'What took you so long?' Rodney turns, looks at me slowly, and boomed, 'I had trouble in getting to Solla Sollew'.

Noodle: You told me once that Roots Manuva has invented his own demonic potion. Once consumed, he has the ability to change from Mr Roots Manuva into 'Lord Gosh', an evil upper-class, 18th Century thug, who prowls the London backstreets by night, issuing cudgel blows to the poor.

Murdoc: That's true. I've drunk some. Anyway Rodney kind of stalked his way into the live room, put the headphones on and unleashed this torrential flood of thunderous lyrics.

'Snatch a piece of my wonderin'
Distant-far like yonderin'
Skin of my tooth like
Seat of my boot like
Fly in my soup like
Where's the waitress?'

Murdoc: As it's going down, I can hear all this banging, clattering, crashes, whistles, buzzers and bells, all kinds of nonsense. 'There's a Wocket in my Pocket!' 'There's a Zlock behind the Clock.'

Hey!! What the hell's going on in there?

'Bounce-wiggle bounce-wiggle
Shakin' all them bangs out
Chemical cut-throats
Bound to blow the brain out'

Murdoc: The racket coming out the room's just getting louder and louder . . . I thought the room was gonna burst.

'These great moons of Dulwich!
Unblock the blockage!!
Twenty Plates, Blue eggs and spam
I will not eat them out a can!!!!'

Murdoc: The whole thing blew up out the vocal booth! Out he flew followed by a huge herd of Pink Fuzzlers, Purple Fezzleheads, Nullafrats, Pootles, Flat-footed Skyquails . . . The whole parade of them just marched on out the studio, bashing cymbals and trombones. Bang! Door slams. Silence.

Noodle is staring at Murdoc, who is obviously enjoying spinning his yarn.

Murdoc: I love Rodney, man. That kid's crackers.

Seasons came and went; spring became summer, autumn became winter, and soon the musical vision that was being assembled became too big even for the vast halls of Kong. With notes and tracks spilling over the walls and out of the windows, it became obvious that it was time to decant this album into another studio.

Noodle: For the main recording we were here at Kong Studios for maybe 8 or 9 months, working just directly on the album. After that we did some mixing over at the Pierce Rooms in West London. Under the Westway at the beginning of winter is not the most conducive location for joy and happiness.

October 25th – November 28th 2004 *Gorillaz occupy Pierce Rooms studio, West London, to complete overdubs and final mixing*

BELOW
Dennis Hopper
Rodney 'Roots' Manuva

GORILLAZ

Noodle: We were so close at this stage to realizing the initial vision, but still there were elements that needed to be reworked or songs that still remained unfinished. Finally, though, with a last, long, sustained push we managed it. Mr Albarn was again instrumental in offering encouragement and a solid support at this pivotal stage.

With one final application of turtle wax and a good vigorous chamois-leather buffing, the album was complete. Danger Mouse and Noodle called the others into the room, whipped off the sheet and all stood open-mouthed at this towering behemoth of a record.

The frantic days, sleepless nights, eyestrain, blisters and microscopic attention to detail had paid off.

Murdoc: You can see now why the others look so much older at our first 'Demon Days' photo shoot.

January 10th – 12th 2005 *'Demon Days' mastered by Howie Weinberg at Masterdisk, New York.*

Russel: Between Danger Mouse, Noodle, me, Murdoc, 2D and our collaborators we'd managed to construct a dark tower of musical power, an awesome, awesome monument.

Noodle: The music has a stricter discipline to it, with a vast scope of dark optimism. It contains a variety of pagan-electro sounds. It has a fuller breadth of vision. The soul of the recording can't avoid being a manifestation of the time, climate and location of the place we were in when it was recorded. Consequently, the colours are rich, dark and heavy, while the rhythms are clean, strategic and relentless. It has a consciousness to it.

2D: It was like someone had taken the first album and coloured it in.

Russel: Danger Mouse took on the role of the fifth Gorilla. For a period there, a whole mind-meld situation was going on. We got a privileged insight into the way the man operates. The fact that his Gnarls Barkley operation has exploded so fiercely is no surprise. The man has a deep and intuitive insight into the soul of music, and a fantastic ability to reference a vast amount of tracks, genres and textures. He's very . . . psychedelic like that . . . kind of like a walking sampler. He understands the dialogue of sound, how it hits the listener, and how to balance melody with shade, gravity and rhythm. With 'Demon Days', he always dug deep to find the genuine spirit of a song and paid real attention to how it stood alongside the other tracks, to give the record a consistency. It's also worth noting that he's a consummate table-tennis player. Seriously, if the whole Gnarls Barkley gig crashes he could conquer the world all over again, simply with a rubber bat and a plastic ball.

Murdoc: Who's Charles Barkley?

OK. Pencils down. Bring your papers to the front and let's see how you've done.

Murdoc: What?

Song By Song. We're going do the 'track by track' thing again.

Murdoc: Oh, no. Oh, Lord. No. Are we gonna do this again? Like we did with the first album? Oh God, this is just too much . . . Go on then. Stick the bloody thing on the turntable . . . Here we go . . . I can't believe this.

ABOVE
Danger Mouse in his very convincing 'Brian Burton' costume

OPPOSITE
'This was a recreation of the original shot that got us signed. But it was obvious we'd been through a lot since then.'
RUSSEL HOBBS

'Demon Days' – Song by Song

INTRO

This disturbing instrumental opener is a deliberate attempt to unsettle and left-foot the listener before we've even had a chance to take our seats.

Noodle (conspiratorial): The album opens with an ominous swirling soundscape of voodoo-esque percussion, keyboard bassoons and sirens. It uses a sample taken from the George A. Romero film 'Dawn of the Dead'. We used this because it expressed a similar sense of foreboding about the world that we felt at the time. There's a sense that some people are working on motorized instinct; they are unthinking automatons rather than souls with any genuine humanity, sensitivity or understanding.

2D (confused): I thought we used it because I like all the zombie films. I love that bit when the zombies tear that biker's arm off!

Murdoc: Yeah. Well, whatever. It's from some stupid zombie flick and we thought it set the rest of the album up quite well. Next.

LAST LIVING SOULS

Track two opens with a solo rhythm from a cheap crappy drum machine.

2D: Two quid on eBay.

The album's motif of a duality between electronic claustrophobia and mournful acoustic refrains first rears its head on this track. The track reeks of sweating trouble between sentient beings and the minefields of the zombie landscape, a ballad for life before death.

Murdoc: My bass seals the deal on this one.

Russel: Sonically there's a nod to the early drum machine sounds that appeared on the second Specials album.

2D: It's a kind of 'dub-meets-European-cinema' thing.

Noodle: Thematically, it's a continuation of the intro sensibility. Sometimes the climate we live in can make you feel like you are one of the few sentient beings left; a lone trooper. The spirit that it was recorded in was quite isolating. We are sometimes encouraged to believe that being conscious and cautious of your actions and their consequences is a weakness or hindrance, and not a virtue.

Murdoc: Yeah. Odd that, innit? Anyway . . . shall we move –

LAST LIVING SOULS

Russel: Musically, the sense of introspection is reflected in the acoustic and piano refrains. It's a harmonious battle of the digital vs acoustic.

Murdoc: And if you listen really closely there's some old geezer coughing in the background.

KIDS WITH GUNS

An ominous, insistent melody welded on to a seriously solid bass riff, this deceptively funky protest song features original B-girl Neneh Cherry. The track summons up the cold, emotionless, mis-tutored stare of children with firearms; chilling. *'They've got something to say mental'.*

Murdoc: Be careful what you feed your kids, TV people.

Russel: It's difficult to sing anti-gun songs without it somehow glamorising the dangers sometimes. But guns have been glamorised since they were first invented. From the days of the Wild West to the Dirty Harry films, from James Bond to the Guns of Navarone, people have always found firearms to be exciting or dangerous.

Murdoc: I seem to remember Sid Vicious posing around with a gun for the filming of 'My Way' a long time ago. And before that in medieval times ladies would fall in love with the knight who was most skilled in 'using his lance'.

Noodle: The song is more of a cautionary tale about being forced into a position of having to arm your children. In the song, the arms are ambiguous, but there is a definite sense of conflict on the way.

Russel: This track features a guest vocal from Neneh Cherry. I loved her 'Raw Like Sushi' album and she's always had a positive collaborative attitude towards music. 'Seven Seconds' with Youssou N'Dour was a superlative tune.

Noodle: Towards the outro there's a moment of subdued tension that then explodes into space, and the track soars into the distance . . . thrown off into the ether. The restraint of the earlier section of the song is actually what gives it the power at the end.

O GREEN WORLD

Starts with the repetitive twanging of a detuned ukelele. Stabbing strings and squawking bird sounds suggest Hitchcock, with a tip of the hat to Bernard Hermann's atonal string 'Psycho' score.

Murdoc: At the beginning of this my bloody raven Cortez flapped his way into the studio and started puking his squawk over the track. Listen, 'Arrrwwkk!!!!!'

The four-to-the-floor marching stomp tramples the sonic scenery underfoot, crushing all in its path. The mayhem is again interrupted with the vocal reflection;

explosions momentarily halt this megalithic beast. But soon it's back on its feet and on its thuggish protest march.

Noodle: This song is the sound of a train coming off its rails. The march of the madmen. We gave 2D's vocals a distorted megaphone effect; it makes the vocal section seem like . . . a memory from the past.

Russel: Like some old vaudeville track.

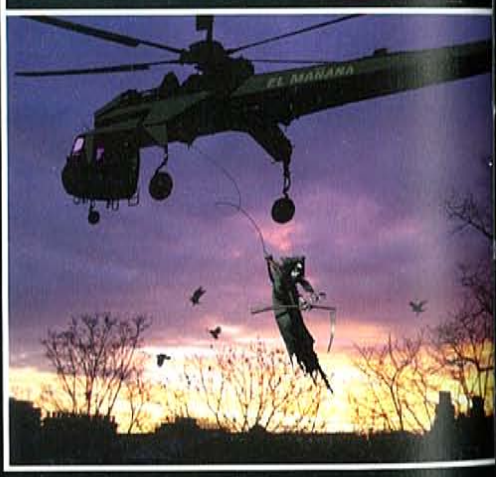
Noodle: The words are a reminder to keep a little greenery in your heart or you may forget what you were fighting for in the first place. And that really is the domain of the undead.

Russel: This one ends ominously on the haunting sound of a bell ringing on into the distance.

Murdoc: Ask not for whom the bell tolls.

2D: Why not?

Murdoc (dramatically): *'It tolls for thee'.*



DIRTY HARRY

The 'Demon Days' keystone, the track that brought it all together. Part Grandmaster Flash's 'The Message', part Pink Floyd. So far, so what? But with the addition of the primitive electro and a consciousness-raising rap courtesy of The Pharcyde's Bootie Brown, tearing a juxtaposition across the Arabic-influenced string line, then you've got a truly quadraphonic, continent-spanning track.

Noodle: This was one of the first tracks I worked on with DJ Danger Mouse. It evolved from a tape recording of an old Gorillaz jam. Danger Mouse added the kids' choir, the San Fernandez Youth Chorus. When they heard the track they were really excited to sing along on it.

Murdoc: Kids, eh? Little treasures. I love 'em. Couldn't eat a whole one, though.

Russel: This track is a real upbeat, defiant, jubilant soul. Musically it's got a real old-school cut-up break in it. I played a kind of Clyde Stubblefield, Bernard Purdie rhythm. Those two were so massive in my drum palette . . . The foundations of hip hop. I also tried to add a little of the feel of, er . . . Zigaboo Modeliste from the Meters.

Noodle: We talked with Bootie about general themes and atmospheres rather than anything specific, but he captured the whole sense of it with this great rap. I feel that Bootie's rap humanizes the position of the soldier, the fighter as an individual.

Russel: War will make soldiers of us all.

Noodle: I agree. There's a sense of infecting the young. As a civilization, we seem to be taking something of their innocence away with a lot of images of conflict that are

constantly being displayed. The addition of the Arabic string section I think provides a balanced view, musically.

Russel: 'War does not determine who is right. Only who is left.'

Murdoc: What's your name, 'Bertrand Russell Hobbs'?

FEEL GOOD INC.

'Feel Good Inc.', featuring De La Soul, is another Gorillaz worldwide smash; a taut tight melodic masterpiece, blending reflective verses with a Technicolor-saturated rap from the De La Soul crew. Bookended by Maseo's infectious, unhinged cackle.

Murdoc: This sounds familiar.

Noodle: This track 'Feel Good Inc.' was chosen to be the first single from the album. We thought it would be an up beat and dynamic return.

Russel: There's a bit of the Tom Tom Club's 'Wordyrappinghood' in this. The beat on this tune is as infectious as influenza. We asked our friends De La Soul to lend a rap to the song, so they came over to the studio and hung out for a day. In the evening they delivered this crazy . . . gooning . . . fun-filled rap. De La Soul throw every vocal grenade they can into the mix here . . . They didn't hold back at all.

Murdoc: Sounds like a bunch of kids trapped in a photo booth.

Russel: 'Three Foot High and Rising' was such a milestone record in terms of giving a lot of people an entry point for hip hop. A huge statement of intent. So colourful, and full of life, humour and . . . just real good energy. They also have a playfulness when it comes to cutting and pasting different styles together.

Murdoc: That reminds me. Posdnuos still owes me five pounds. I'll give him a call.

Russel: Muds. Sit down.

Noodle: The windmill imagery line is a representation of . . . a note of optimism, a memory of a simpler time. Like maybe, a snapshot of an older world, more innocent.

Russel: The production on 2D's vocal passages reflects this sensibility again, like an image beaming at you from the past . . . a ghost of a memory.

EL MAÑANA

After the hysteria of 'Feel Good Inc.' 'El Mañana' is a Quaalude for the soul, a heartbeat of tranquillity amidst the album's journey. Opening with gently glittering synth sounds and a soft delivery from 2D, the suggestion of sirens hiding somewhere in the mix gives a hint that all might not be well in this bright new tomorrow.

The clouds are descending . . .

Noodle: This opens up with the sensation of . . . drifting, as if maybe afloat in a sensory deprivation tank.

Murdoc (quipping): Or . . . maybe like you've just woken up in a bath.

2D: In . . . Spain.

Noodle: The track provides a moment of internal dialogue, laid over a staccato ballad. This composition was the very last to be written, and provided the necessary feel for the mid-point of the record; the calm at the centre of the storm.

Russel: It arrived like a winning goal in the last few seconds of a match. It sounds like a digital soul record. With a Spanish syncopation. I programmed the beat completely by accident when I sat on my drum machine . . . It sounded all over the place, but if you listen to it, it does kind of make sense.

EVERY PLANET WE REACH IS DEAD

At the point where usually you'd find the 'notes to self', memos to the accountant or messages for the milkman more usually described as 'filler', 'Demon Days' is still delivering diamonds. This track is driven along on harmonies so sweet they would have made Marvin Gaye blub, and ends with a swaggering, Judgement Day piano solo from the actual Mr Ike Turner. Heavy, heavy soul.

Noodle: Every planet we reach is dead. An image of . . . catching a glimpse of your soul, the battlefield, from above. *'I lost my land'*. This is . . . how d'you put it . . . An 'unloaded question'. A soft proposal to question ourselves and our decisions.

Russel: There's a Charles Bukowski quote that's goes something like . . . 'If you're losing your soul and you know it, then you've still got a soul left to lose.' You can kinda hear this sentiment in the line, *'I lost my way, what am I going to do?'*.

Noodle: Sometimes the answers are not available. And sometimes describing the problem is a part of the solution.

Murdoc: And sometimes, if you ignore a problem, it'll go away . . . eventually.

Russel: The piano solo on the outro is supplied by Mr Ike Turner. It's real easy to forget the influence that Ike Turner had on music. I mean, James Brown learnt a lot of his showmanship and work ethic from Ike and his Kings of Rhythm band very early on. Ike's 'Rocket 88' in 1951 is widely regarded as being possibly the first true rock 'n' roll record; pre-Chuck Berry, pre-James Brown. Ike's Kings of Rhythm Band were the forerunners to James Brown's Famous Flames.

I owe him for helping me when I was down and I also owe him again for playing on our track. He's been incredibly generous towards me.

Murdoc: Ike Turner, eh? *'The gift that keeps on giving'.*

NOVEMBER HAS COME

Tight hand-claps and a neat bass line introduce this pared-down, lyrically driven magnum opus. Reclusive rapper MF Doom supplies one of the most intricate and awe-inspiring raps ever committed to tape. A cold lean panther of a track.

Russel: It was actually Murdoc who managed to get MF Doom on this track, funnily enough. He was running around with his 'talent-catcher butterfly net' ensnaring unsuspecting musicians that lay momentarily dormant. He would creep up, put the net over them and then spray them with his homemade seduction spray, 'Ambition for Men'. That was it. They were hooked.

Murdoc: And also it was a fantastic opportunity to work with some real characters. MF stands for Metal Face and I think it's in some kind of tribute to Spider Man's enemy Dr Doom. So the rapper wears this metal mask the whole time. But whatever, the bloke just came to Kong Studios and was, like, head-butting the walls, opening cans of beer with his mad metal face. Absolutely nuts! But he gave a good tune, so all's forgiven. Right, right, right?

Russel: It's straight back down to earth on this track.

2D: The beginning sounds like an old Wham! song.

Murdoc: But really in time. When Doom recorded this vocal, I had a stopwatch and I said 'see how many words you can say inside the first 30 seconds'. Boy, oh boy, did he deliver!!

ALL ALONE

Unstable UK grime in an unlikely union with cartoon beats and other-worldly loveliness. Featuring a quick-fire rap from Roots Manuva and a soaring vocal line from Martina Topley-Bird.

Murdoc: I sampled the intro off my mobile here. *Do –doo dodo doo -do doo do do oo* 'Hello?'

Russel: A machine-gunning rap from London's own Roots Manuva. His vocal just kinda dances between the huge rolling circular beat.

Murdoc: Like a boxer filled up with brandy.

Russel: Roots Manuva has been dropping by Kong Studios off and on since we started. I thought his 'Run Come Save Me' album was incredible, and Gorillaz have talked about collaboration with him for a long time. It would be a limitation to say that Roots Manuva is at the forefront of UK hip hop as a rapper. He is at the forefront of hip hop, *of music*, full stop. His creative qualities and vocal imagery create a singular universal sound and he's set to become a dominant force in music worldwide, for sure.

Noodle: The additional lullaby vocals come courtesy of Martina Topley-Bird. Her vocal's so light, warm, child-like and sweet it provides the release from the rhythmic fury. We met her through mutual friends that'd worked on her 'Quixotic' album.

WHITE LIGHT

'White Light' is to 'Demon Days' as 'Punk' was to 'Gorillaz'. A breathless, shouty punk rocker with no table manners. Probably one of Murdoc's mood-making bedroom tracks.

Murdoc: If you see this track coming towards you, run. It'll get you wrapped up in all types of trouble.

The mad sonic-pounding proceedings are cut mid-rant by a brief moment of church-like clarity. The epiphany never comes, however, gentle listener, as the lolloping vagrant–track shakes the vomit out of its beard and returns to its insatiable urges.

Russel: This is the most punk rock sounding track on the album. Some of my medication had just worn off, which is why the drums came out like this.

2D: The guitar line on this track was played by one of the Mexican inmates that Murdoc brought back with him after his time in jail. They helped him escape and now Murdoc owes them.

Noodle: This song is about the relentless fury of alcohol. The focused drive and singular thirst that that kind of desire creates. One man's passion is another man's addiction: Alcohol is one of the ways we suppress our indecisions.

Murdoc: Certainly one of the better ones, love. 'Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.'

2D: Erm . . . Yeah . . . some drunk . . . tramp did the vocal for this song. Y'know . . . the 'White Light' bit. He sang it into a Dictaphone for us one morning when he was slumped in a heap down by the canal.

Murdoc: Er . . . Sorry. Did you just call me a tramp? . . . You better watch your lip, cod-piece-face, or you're gonna be listening to the rest of this CD through a drip. OK?

DARE

Gorillaz' bona fide disco smash. 'DARE' was born of a happy accident in the studio when naughty old uncle Shaun Ryder knocked over a table full of words. Laying a haunting Ennio Morricone-esqe line over the metallic disco, this supplies Señor Ryder with a vast canvas over which to shout his accusatory gurnings, then shoves them feet first out of the nation's speakers.

Noodle: Yes, there are elements of humour and playfulness on the album. This is also to balance out the darker songs and sounds. I think even in 'Demon Days' you must have humour to keep your spirits up and help you fight the battles you face.

Murdoc: This track's a number one with a bullet. And if I was you I'd stick a tenner on it. It's disco, it's hard and it's a double top buzz, nice one sorted. When we recorded the original vocal that Shaun did he was stuck in the vocal booth with his headphones on, but he couldn't hear us. So he shouted over to us to turn the headphones up.

'I can't hear myself . . . I can't hear myself. Hey! Turn up the headphones, would ya!'

So we're turning them up and he's going 'Yes . . . it's coming up a bit . . . it's coming up . . . it's coming up . . . it's coming up . . . It's there!'

It sounded so good that we decided to use that bit for the chorus. And I think you'll find, even by accident, it's actually a killer chorus.

Russel: Shaun Ryder was the singer of Happy Mondays, a huge influence on so many people. As a lyricist he was one of the only true voices and documenters of that late '80s early '90s period. You can tell he's an original because he spawned so many imitators. Not just musically but in his lifestyle and the way he spoke, right down to his sense of humour and taste in clothes.

Murdoc: Balls. All that Manc street talk is just a big put-on for the cameras. Shaun's really just a big posh kid.

Noodle: This track went through many manifestations before finally settling itself in this form. A big shiny Gorillaz tune.

FIRE COMING OUT OF THE MONKEY'S HEAD

A dark fable narrated by none other than Hollywood legend Dennis Hopper. Bouncing beats, tight rubber bands, and a ghostly gospel choir set the scene for Mr Hopper's peerless recounting of the parable of the Happy Folk.

Noodle: This tale is about balance. You must be able to open your eyes without being poisoned by the evil you can see. And even innocence must prepare to fight when it's necessary. Apathy is a decision with consequences and you must take action where necessary.

Russel: Without losing sight of what you are fighting for. The tale on this track is narrated by Mr Dennis Hopper. Noodle ran into him at some award show and it turns out he knew some Gorillaz tracks already. We told him what we were working on and then took it from there. He came down to the studio for an afternoon and, y'know, put his presence on the record.

Noodle: The reason why we chose Dennis Hopper was because we felt there was a similarity between the time 'Easy Rider' was filmed and the climate that 'Demon Days' was recorded in. During the late sixties the world was in a transitional period where the accepted wisdom of the authorities was being challenged and people were doubting the political decisions of their governments. In 'Easy Rider' Dennis's character perfectly reflected that spirit of opposition, or at least the ability to question the authority of certain institutions.

Murdoc: Look, we chose Dennis to read the track 'cos he's cool, you know.

Russel: He's been a spokesman for free creativity and ignoring the rules at the risk of holding your own sanity to ransom. Therefore, a natural Gorillaz cohort. This little parable that Dennis narrates is a short story that Noodle wrote in the style of Herman Hesse, a childlike fable of a people too good-hearted to see the steady influx of other people with a . . . darker agenda.

Noodle: Both groups depicted are extreme portraits of the people they are meant to represent, but this is to show how the two sides, ignorant to the position of the other, will clash. This results in a devastating loss for all; in which no one won.

Murdoc: Oi! D'you remember when we used to piss about and put records out? That was fun, wasn't it?

DON'T GET LOST IN HEAVEN

An *homage* to Brian Wilson's genius for vocal arrangement, 'Don't Get Lost . . . ' is a gleaming confection of choir, piano and glockenspiel. If sunshine had a sound, this'd be it; displaying a warm-hearted recreation of the Beach Boys' signature layered choral sound.

Russel: This is a little slice of West Coast sun-soaked harmony. The part this plays is as a transition into a more optimistic exit for the album. Like coming up for air.

Noodle: For the orchestrated harmony we drafted in London Community Gospel Choir. This works as a prelude or link to the next track. The message is 'Don't get lost in the fog'. Again, it's saying, 'be aware of what's at stake when you lose sight of the goal'.

Russel: Or maybe don't let the negative events cloud over the bigger picture.

Murdoc (sarcastic): Or you can lead a horse to water but a pencil must be lead. Christ! C'mon. Get on with it. I've got a plane to catch.

DEMON DAYS

The light at the end of the tunnel, the dawn after the longest night of the soul. Based around the same chords as 'Don't Get Lost . . . ', allowing the two songs to become one glorious crescendo, a real musical climax that guides the listener into a far more optimistic climate.

Noodle: As with the previous track, the vocal harmonies were provided by the London Community Gospel Choir. This is the final relief; the hope, the rapture and the reward for the journey.

2D (reflective and thoughtful): You remember when you were a little kid and you would look at the clouds in the sky as the sunlight bounced off them. And something that simple would make you feel a part of everything and all alone at the same time. And that feeling's not something you can ever put into words so you spend your whole life chasing it; making music, taking pictures, painting. . . whatever, in the hope that other people will understand that sense or . . . feeling. As creative entities we look for signs of life outside ourselves, for a connection to . . . alleviate the sense of solitude. That's why we all do what we do, whether we know it of ourselves or not.

Murdoc: Er . . . . . Nope. Still not getting you, mate. It is, and will always be, for the birds after the show. Anyone who says any different is just spinning you a yarn.

2D: Er . . . OK. Maybe you're right.

Russel: The track's a positive re-assurance. Today's a new day. We still have everything to gain, and a universe to fight for. This is the album's exit. The flip-side of the intro. It's a very uplifting and optimistic finale to the album, as the beginning presents the listener with the sensation of being alone, isolated, and the end feels more like a universal connection.

Murdoc: Yes. Hmmm. I see.

Noodle: All we really have in life is the ability to feel, and understand. If you remove that part of yourself in order to fight, then you have lost the battle at the start.

Russel: To be an un-conscientious objector is of no real value.

Murdoc (exhaling): Right, then. That's that done . . . .Deep breaths, deep breaths.

So there you have it. A fifteen-limbed, multi-faced, educational audio spider-tyrant, fully charged and ready to roam the planet.

Let's see what happens next . . .

Rock It

As the next stage in her culture-sweeping campaign, Noodle launched a three-pronged offensive. Having filmed the zombies of Kong, mindless automatons whose brains had become Ebola-ridden slush, she released this as proof of the illness, under the guise of a satellite Gorillaz broadcast video entitled 'Rock It'.

Noodle: I had been recording the evidence of zombification that I witnessed in Kong since my return. I had suspected that the source was the grubby brown viruses that had been emanating from the television screens, and the radio waves. I made the decision to release the footage as an information broadcast, accompanied by the first music track that I had asked 2D to sing upon his return.

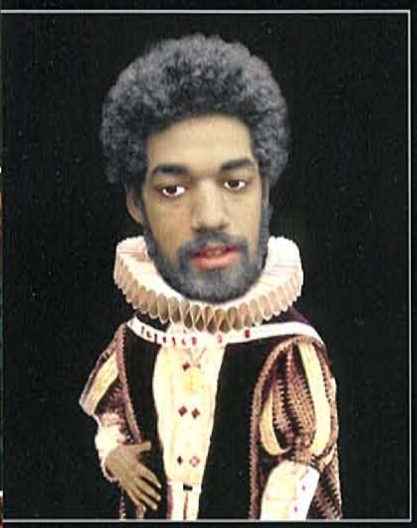
The 'Rock It' video is set in a hellish landscape, full of all the worst type of rotting celebrities on the planet; a landscape of waste and cultural sewage, redundant brain-

dead popstars lie gibbering upon the ground. Gorillaz are trudging through this terrain, treading on the heads of all these corpses.

Murdoc: They're all going 'blah blah blah blah blah', repeating the same old rubbish that these sort of people churn out. Gorillaz are tracking through the landscape thinking that, during our absence, the landscape has turned to . . . well . . . shit. And at the end, one of those talent show winners that you can never remember the name of appears as this great big monster with COMPETITION WINNER above her head and dead kittens flying out of her mouth. So that was it, really. Good video, good song.

Adding to the sinister edge, the video is inter-cut with the apparition of the ancient satanic statue of Pazuzu, who appears to survey this barren landscape. Make of this what you will.

ABOVE
Images from Gorillaz video 'Rock It'



ABOVE
Sir Brian of Mousse – Danger Mouse's great, great, great-grandfather and Kong Studios frequenter back in the day

OPPOSITE:

TOP
The Police Portacabin, erected outside Kong Studios

MIDDLE
The boiler room in the bunker of Kong underground

BOTTOM
The Gateway to Hell

Grand Re-opening of Kong Studios

December 8th 2004 *Grand Re-opening of Kong Studios and 'Rock It' released online*

The 'Rock It' video was released to coincide with the Grand Re-opening of Kong Studios. Access to the Gorillaz studio via the website had been shut down since October 31st 2002 when a naked man was seen running through the marshes, screaming, near Kong Studios in Districtshire, Essex. The police immediately cordoned off the area, and the only access for online visitors was to a small portacabin placed outside the building.

The re-opening of Kong, at the end of 2004, revealed that not only had Noodle cleared the building of the festering flesh-craving corpses, but that the building had also been vastly extended. The only clue to the perpetrators of this construction was a business leaflet left in the lobby, from the company Zombie Flesh Eaters.

Murdoc: Oh yes. The Zombie Flesh Eaters. Those lot are a big bunch of stalkers; web designers, digital manglers and online hassle-merchants. Total home-wreckers. I've had absolutely no luck clearing any of them away from Kong Studios. They're constantly extending the Gorillaz property, against my wishes, and subsequently filling the place up with all types of rubbish. They're the worse type of Gorillaz fan, assisting Jamie with his infantile meanderings and internet-based troublemaking. They, along with Hewlett, should be thoroughly imprisoned for crimes against art, technology and design.

He's off again . . .

Murdoc: They've been coming here since I bought the place. I hear them scurrying around like rats behind the walls, night after night, year after year. You'd think they'd have something better to do. They've been around so long I even know them by name. Seriously. It started with Jamie's mate, Mat Wakeham.

Murdoc counts the culprits' names off on his fingers one by one.

Murdoc: Then came the Watkins' brothers: Matt and Tim. 'James Coore', Mike Robinson. He's the worst. Kate McLauchlan. She's more trouble. Kersti bloody Bergstrom. There's some voyeur, 'Seb Monk'. All of them. Just won't stop fiddling with MY SODDING PROPERTY. I started a band, man. Not a bloody crèche. Freaks.

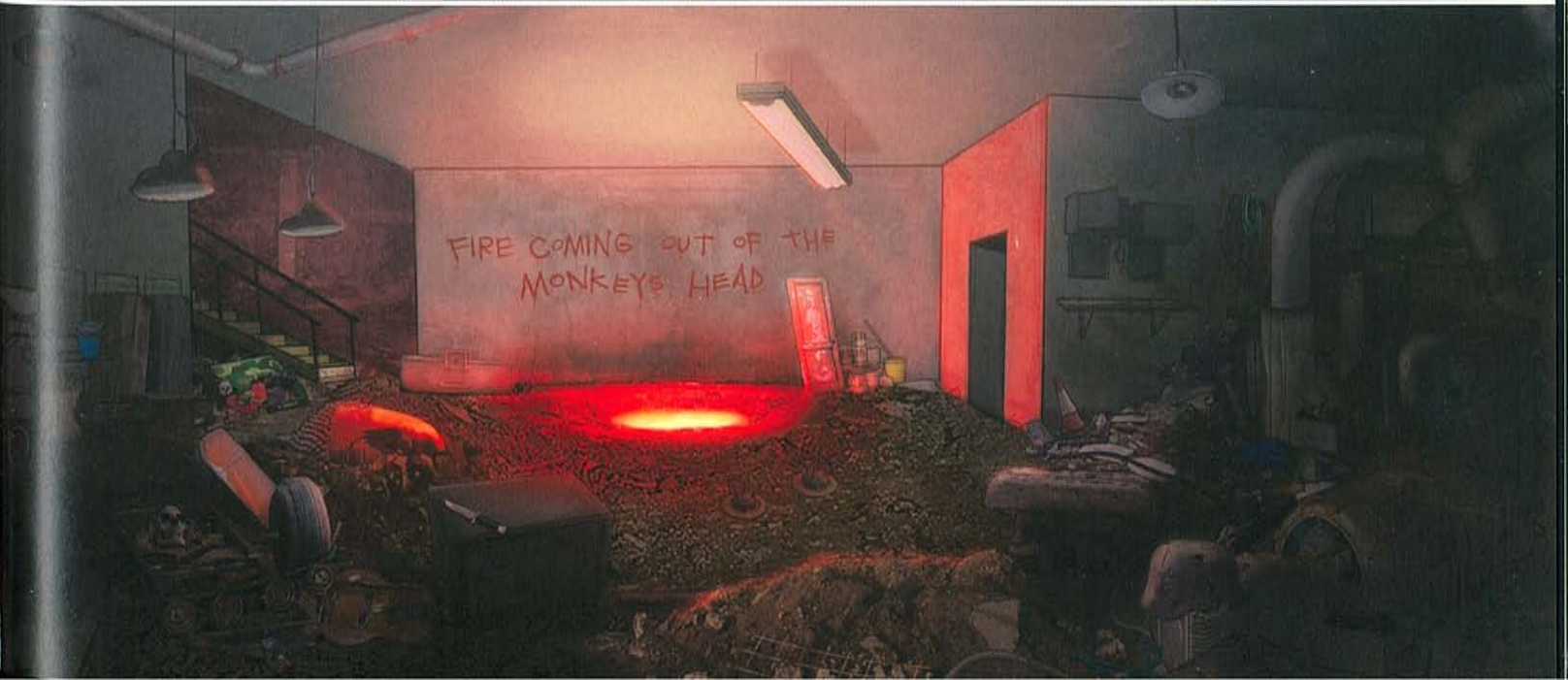
Kong now featured an updated studio, fresh games, and a whole new underground bunker section. The newly-discovered bunker also exposed that, previously unknown to Gorillaz, the building contained its very own Gateway to Hell.

Murdoc: You can really roast your chestnuts round that fire, I tell you!

Noodle: While the band were working at Kong Studios one night, the producer Danger Mouse managed to crash Murdoc's new Winnebago into a wall in the carpark. This unveiled a whole new section of the building that had been previously sealed up. It appeared to be some kind of disused subterranean hideout. It was an absolute tip, but everything that was kept in storage down there was still intact.

GORILLAZ
CRIME SCENE-DO NOT ENTER
SITE OFFICE

CORROSIVE


FIRE COMING OUT OF THE
MONKEYS HEAD

The Gorillaz also found out that Danger Mouse's great, great, great-grandfather used to inhabit the building that stood on the site before Kong Studios was built. The band suspected it was one of the reasons why he was destined to work on this record.

Really?

Murdoc: Yeah. Go and ask him.

Search For A Star

In tandem with the 'Rock It' release, Noodle immediately launched the second phase in her assault, sending out her coded signal and looking for real sentient life out in the airwaves; a call to arms for all genuine talent and like-minded creators. Convinced that there had to be more out there than the endless parade of zombies, charlatans and talentless morons on offer, Noodle set out to find like-minded souls all over the world.

Noodle: I wanted to assemble a creative army. *'It is better to light a candle than complain about the darkness'.*

BELOW
The Search for a Star auditions room, Kong Studios

Murdoc: I'd rather complain about the darkness than burn my house down.

Noodle: Artistic skill and the ability to enlighten, educate and entertain through displays of ingenuity, insight and discipline should not be treated as a useless exercise in moronic entertainment. As Murdoc always says, 'True talent should be food for the soul, not turds for the mind'. Your 'Pop Idols' are buffoons, nothing more than landfill, and you are shovelling this garbage into the heads of your own children.

You are asking your children to aspire to idiots and are sowing the seeds of your own downfall, growing vacuous, sickly weeds. These weeds will grow up to strangle you of any oxygen. You may laugh while your empire crumbles, but you are putting chemicals in the foodchain.

Murdoc: It's just a bit of fun, love. Calm down.

She devised an ingenious method for contacting fresh talent, clean minds and new collaborators. She launched the World's First Global Internet Talent Contest: Search for a Star.

Noodle: By making the competition an internet-based quest, it threw it open to all, irrespective of age, looks or location. It was a quest for talent, not a singing competition.

Russel: And unlike many of the television-based projects, it wasn't just an exercise in pointlessly humiliating people in front of the nation.

Murdoc shifts uncomfortably in his seat . . .

Search for a Star was designed to be a rare Olympian Style Tournament, embracing artistic expression in all its forms, with an aim to seek out and shine a light on the next wave of talented artists.

Entries were invited from all areas of the creative spectrum. They could be anything: animations, line drawings, music, sickly off-cuts, brief sketches, film scenes, caught-on-cameras clips, out-takes, voice-overs, whether humorous, dark, edgy, juvenile, insightful or thought-provoking. It allowed the audience to set the parameters. It also allowed the audience to select the winner.

The prize was an opportunity to collaborate with Gorillaz.

Noodle: I believe that the real prize was the submission. Through entering the competition many people learnt and crafted new talents, and the format allowed them to display their talents all over the world.

Murdoc: I'd just like to say, I was against all of this from the outset.

December 15th 2004 *Search for a Star launched; 'Noodleblast' takes place on Gorillaz.com*

Noodle talked to the online audience for the first time in almost two years, under the title Noodleblast. Servers crash worldwide as kids dive down their broadband networks, in a mad scrabbling dash to question the diminutive pop princess.

Over several months the entries flooded in to www.gorillaz.com. Artists, musicians, circus acts, directors, special effects dons and weirdos produced everything from cinematic genius to oddball homebrew fun. Hundreds of talented animators put forward entries using a wide range of techniques, from stop frame to hand drawn to computer animation. All four Gorillaz sat in the auditions room at Kong, giving their considered opinion on the efforts pouring in from all over the globe.

Murdoc: Weeks, upon weeks, upon weeks of sitting through these pointless terrible entries. In hindsight, I'm actually on Simon Cowell's side.

2D: Cowelly can stick his X-Factor right up his arse.

Murdoc: Well, yeah, everything he touches does have the 'Y' factor to it.

2D: Yeah. 'Y' bother.

Murdoc: Total rubbish.

By the close of the competition over 4,000 entries had arrived, all of which were displayed and archived on tellies in the audition room at Kong. Over the course of the contest, the submissions were viewed more than a million times. So successful was Noodle's call to arms that Gorillaz decided to widen the contest and find not just one but three winners; an animator, a graphic artist and a musician. The final results were to be showcased on the fourth single from 'Demon Days'.

Murdoc: We haven't got to that bit yet.

Gorillaz had proved that despite the onslaught of cynically targeted popstars drawn up in boardrooms by accountants and advertising experts, there were people out there who were interested in creating something new, different and against the grain. People like Gorillaz.

Murdoc: Yeah. It also proved that the Gorillaz world was like 'Why Don't You?' on crack.

OPPOSITE
'Now I know the real meaning of the phrase "terminally bored"'
MURDOC NICCALS

Search For A Star was a cry in the dark that elicited the answer Noodle had been hoping for: they were not alone.

Murdoc (mimicking 'Close Encounters' type sound): Beeep Boo Beep Boo Boop!

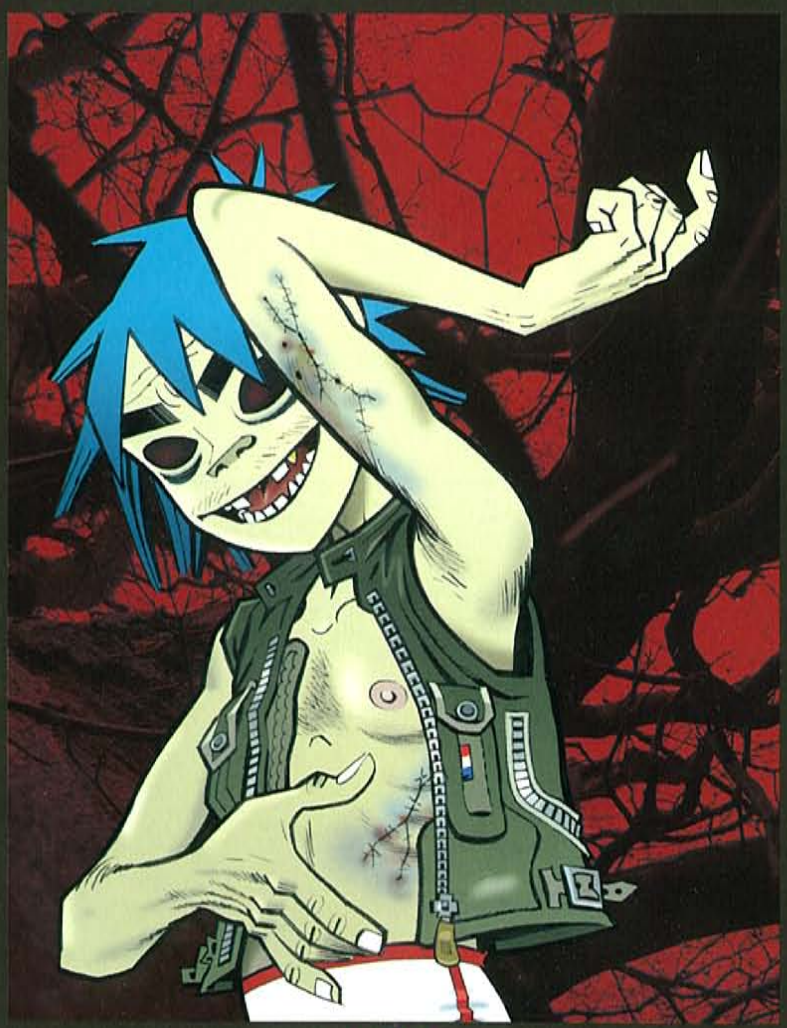
Reject False Icons

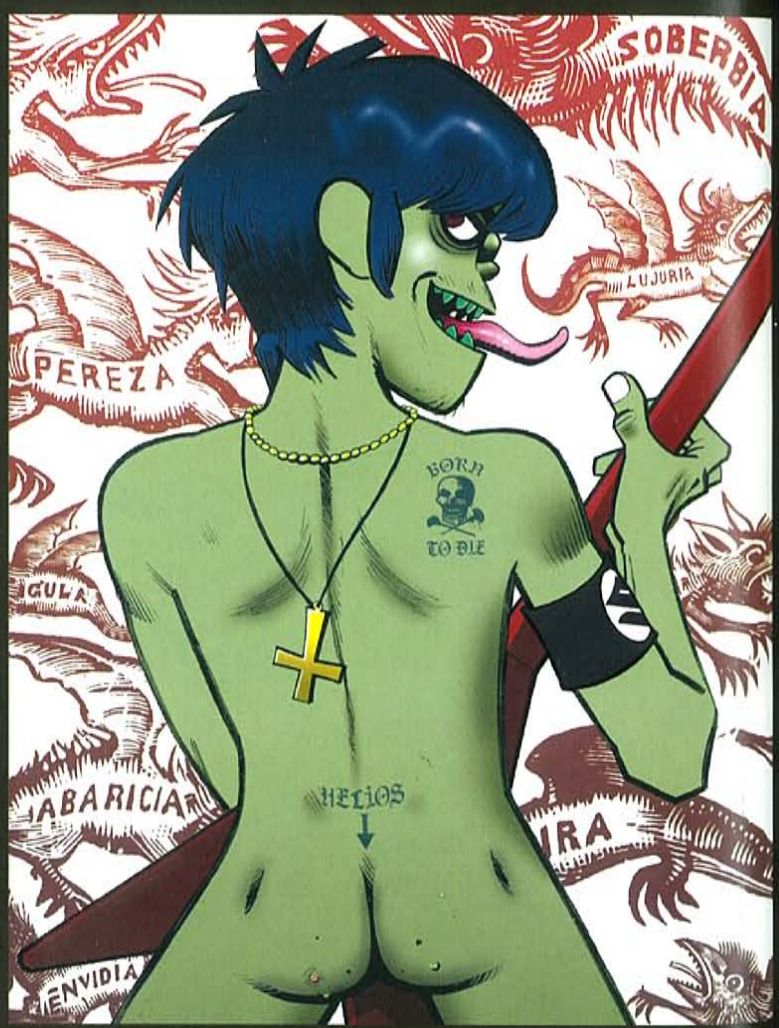
The last frame of the 'Rock It' video had introduced the world to the final front in Noodle's battle; the words REJECT FALSE ICONS were blazoned across a flaming sunset and the sinister figure of Pazuzu. A relatively self-explanatory exhortation to viewers to think for themselves, this commandment was embraced wholeheartedly by the growing community of Gorillaz aficionados online.

Noodle: We live in a society that pays respect to the most inane of characters. We are lead to believe that what they have to say has importance or meaning, but largely it's just a photo opportunity. The cult of celebrity means that people with the most limited of insight or talent become the privileged members of our society.

Murdoc: Well . . . it's not all bad, is it, eh? Without a little celebrity we wouldn't have people like Jennifer Lopez, and that really would take the sunshine out of your day. Right. I'm off. I've gotta go . . . er . . . polish my bass.

Watched over and reported on diligently by the crack team at the official fansite fans.gorillaz.com, the Reject False Icons subculture spread like a particularly virulent social disease. The motto sprang up in all sorts of places: a shop sign on London's Charing Cross Road was modified to carry the legend REJECT FALSE ICONS and penguins at the





2D SWITCHBACK DARE-DEVIL
FERRIS BUGLES BIG NIGHT OUT
HOHNER CLAVINET IS MY WEAPON

MURDOC THE BASS SLAYER
PERNICIOUS CARNIVOROUS LUNAR ACTIVITIES
FLYING V IS MY WEAPON

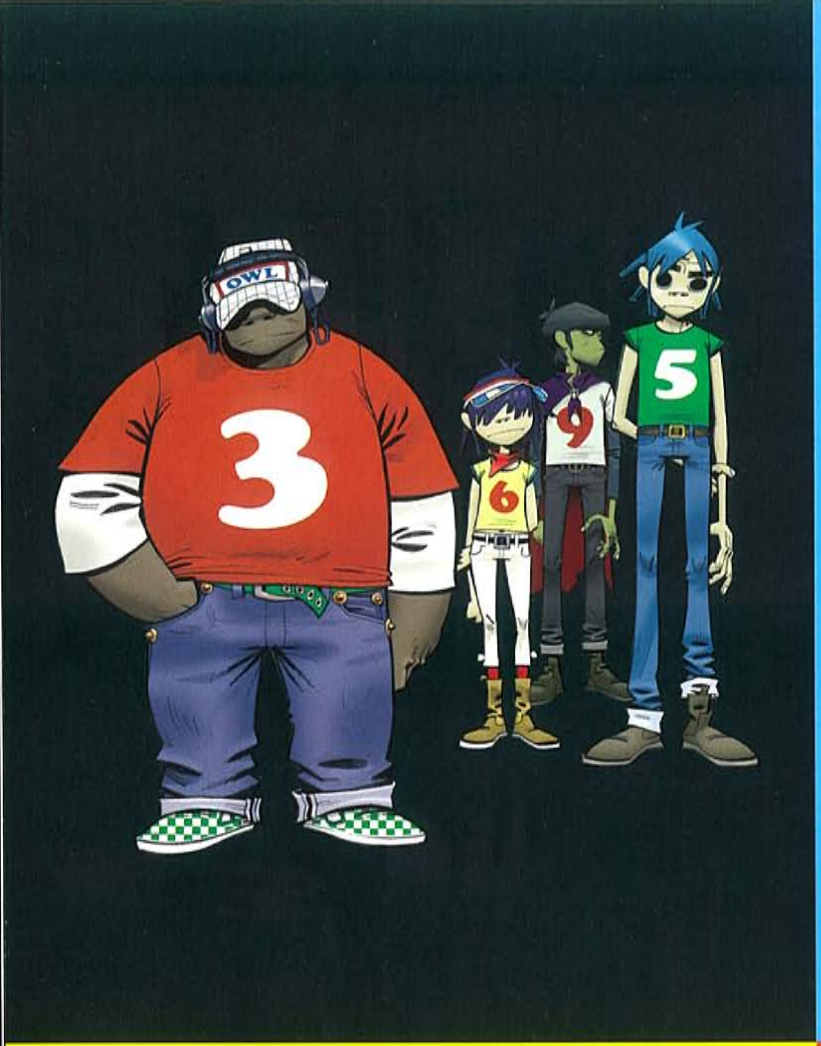
North Pole were intrigued to find it written in seaweed on a passing iceberg. A website was launched to record these occurrences. This allowed fans to submit their photos of ways to spread the message by using graffiti or by slapping 'Reject False Icons' stickers on every available surface. The-ultra desirable stickers were available for a limited period from the site and from selected record shops in the UK.

Murdoc: Endorsing vandalism! Great!! It just gets better!

So with the message that Gorillaz were riding an apocalyptic assault on mediocrity firmly established, it was time to do some regular band cack and make a video to support the release of their new single 'Feel Good Inc.'

Murdoc: Right. I've got a couple of small things to attend to and then I'll be back to film the 'Feel Good Inc.' video. Noodle, you go and start blowing up your inflatable island; Russel, tune your drums up. De La Soul will be here any moment now . . .

BELOW
Respect False Icons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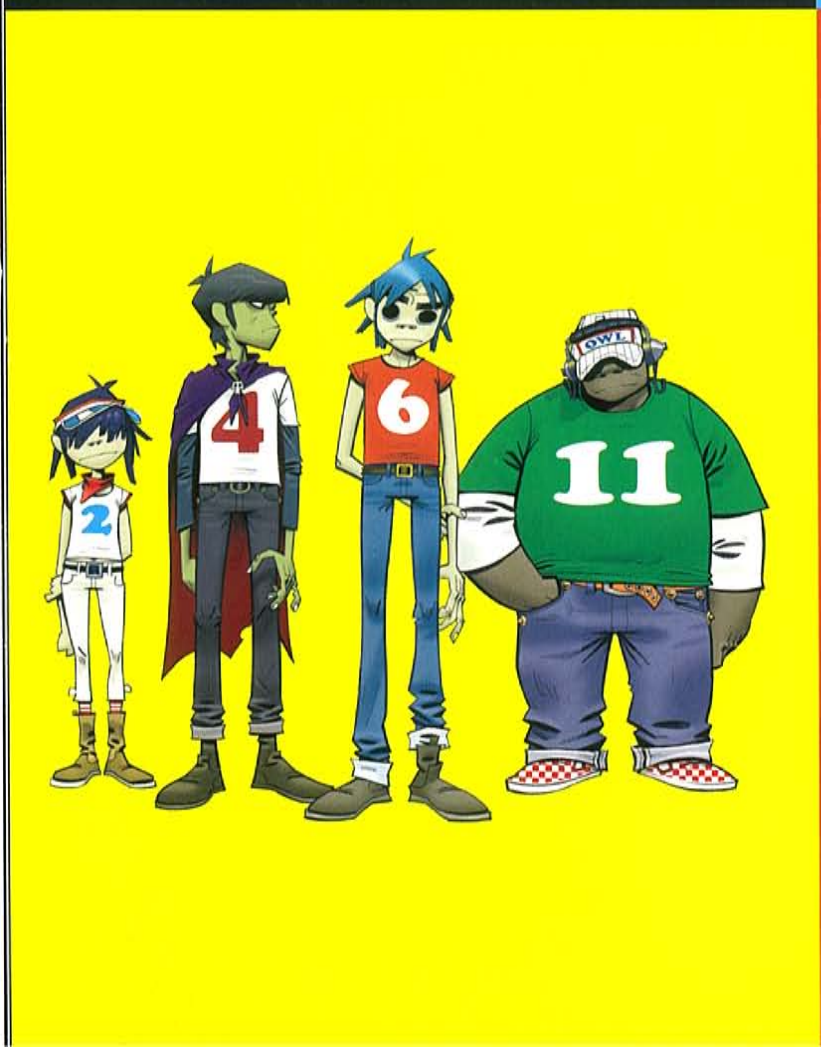
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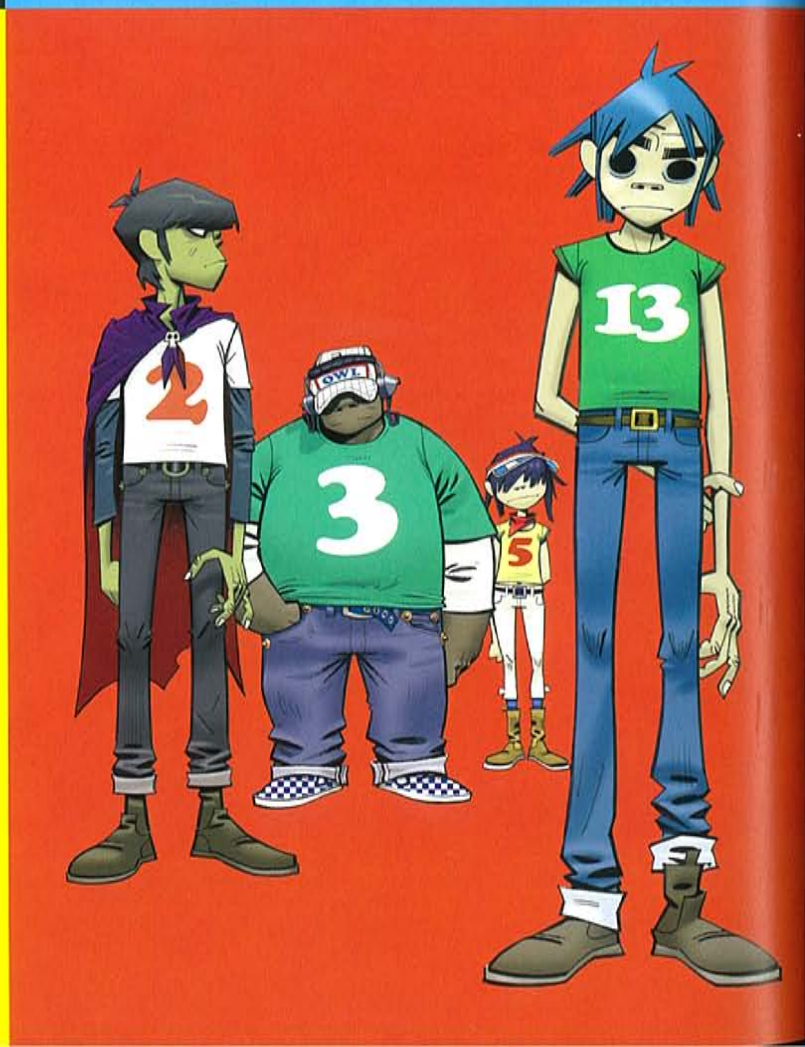
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Chapter 10
'Feel Good Inc.'

'You've got a new horizon. It's ephemeral style
In a melancholy town where we never smile
And all I wanna hear is the message beep
My dreams, they come a kissin', cause I don't get sleep, no...'

The video to accompany the 'Feel Good Inc.' single was to be Gorillaz' first proper public appearance since the Isle of MTV festival concert of July 2002. The single would herald both the return of the band and the imminent release of their 'Demon Days' album.

Therefore it was imperative that the single and the video not only made a dramatic impact on the public and the charts, but that they showcased a band who had markedly improved on their previous work.

The budget was high, the expectations higher, but the subsequent short film that was created for 'Feel Good Inc.' was a gorgeous and superlative piece of work.

Noodle made contact with Jamie Hewlett around February 2005 in order to begin the storyboarding process.

Noodle: It had been almost three years since I had had any contact with Mr Hewlett, but he was still at his desk playing with his pencil set. I explained my new ideas and the themes for the record. It was important to me that the emotional depth of the video matched the darker tone of the album, to display that Gorillaz had moved on and were now making a bigger, more advanced assessment of the position our world was in.

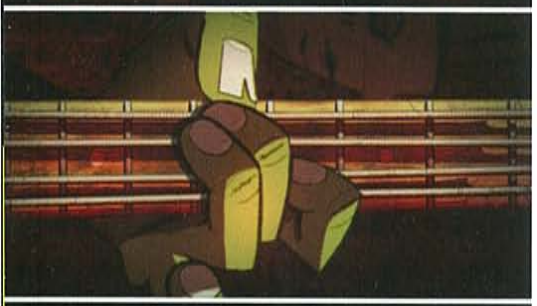
Murdoc: Sorry, which page are we on?

2D: 223. No hang on. It's 219. Actually, I'm going have to wait until Chris lays this bit out because it's hard to tell at this stage.

Between Noodle and Jamie, a theme of escape versus imprisonment and the personal power to chose between the two, was developed, although both felt strongly that this should not be displayed in an overt or obvious way. It was important to keep the delivery humorous, soulful and free from a sense of condescension or dogma. Jamie storyboarded the narrative, shot by shot, before Passion Pictures and co-director Pete Candeland were dusted off and brought back in.

Andrew Ruhemann, Passion Pictures: After the huge success of the videos from the first album there was always going to be some trepidation about whether we could match or even surpass the vibrancy and dynamism of those films. The 'Feel Good' video brought back the Gorillaz in a blaze of glory. Jamie and Pete together with all the team here at Passion produced a video that was visually stunning.

Murdoc: Well, yeah, them and the actual members of Gorillaz. Cheers, mate.



The video opens on a vast sprawling metropolis, a grimy dystopia over which the Feel Good Tower surveys. It is this building that houses three of the Gorillaz – Murdoc, 2D and Russel – plus a whole host of liggers and burnouts, who lie smashed upon the floor, obviously the casualties of an endless, epic party.

2D seems deeply affected and visibly drained by this apparent self-imprisonment. Outside, Noodle is seen sitting on the edge of a floating island, which appears to be powered by a windmill positioned on top of the island. However, she is being monitored by the ominous presence of two black helicopters. At first it is unclear whether they are preventing her escape or chasing her away. Inside the tower, 2D remains apparently unable to free himself from this state. To make matters worse, the ghostly apparitions of De La Soul appear to taunt 2D, further adding to his distress.

Noodle: Sometimes, in order to express a feeling or an idea directly, it requires the nature of that expression to be made indirectly, or through a certain symbolism. This is true of most myths, fables and other cautionary tales, as it requires the viewer to make a leap of understanding in order to fully interpret the message. When the meaning does come to them it resonates more powerfully. It was for this reason that I looked to the work of Hayao Miyazaki, one of Japan's most fantastic animators, for inspiration. It was with specific reference to the imagery he used in his film 'Castle in the Sky' that I spoke to Jamie Hewlett when we began the process of providing a visual accompaniment to the music of the 'Feel Good Inc.' song.

Russel: The main idea behind the video was quite simple. It was a statement to show that Gorillaz had become locked in a world of hedonism. We each react differently to it, but it is only Noodle through her authentic innocence that had freed herself from this cycle of decadence. I don't think she was ever really a part of it anyway, but through her involvement in the band I think she experiences it by default.

2D: I think Gorillaz built a tower around themselves that they couldn't get out of; of excess and debauchery. The video is based on this feeling. For a while it was great to be on the inside, but the party got out of hand. It's become like the 'Last days of Pompeii' . . . a . . . er . . . Sodding Gomorrah. The Feel Good Tower represents this. The palace we built has become a prison. In the video I'm just waking up from this year-long hedonist's dream, and I realise that maybe . . . the fruits of success have turned sour.

Murdoc: I thought the set inside the Tower was far-out. Loads of fantastic-looking chicks just lying around. I tell you, when I grow up I'm gonna get a place just like that.

Russel: The money spent on this video is more than most bands generate in their entire career, but we were trying to make something that really made sense. Not just more shelf filler.

Murdoc: What's with the 'duck head' symbol in every video? It's in this one, inside your megaphone when you're singing.

2D: Dunno. Damn, it's just a sticker that I like. Anyway, we see that this party is still continuing around us, around me. Noodle is outside of the Tower, in the pale morning-after light, sitting on the edge of this floating island. And you can see she knows what's occurring, the results of this gluttony. But people have to wake up to it themselves. So that's what the video is about; being trapped by the things you make, and realising everyone else is caught up in it. Using it. Just . . . they need their party to continue, to keep this thing afloat. The Tower of Babel.

Murdoc: Like a big twatfest.

Noodle: The helicopters are flying around the tower to make sure no one escapes, monitoring the behaviour inside. It is important to them to maintain the status quo, so that they keep people where they want them, under control. The role I play in this is of the escapee. It is difficult to tell whether I am the dream of freedom or whether I am the one who has awoken. 2D is definitely still stuck in the nightmare.

2D: Actually . . . I've got absolutely no idea what this video is about.

The Gorillaz were called down to a secret 'closed set' location, where they would film their parts, before the footage was to be handed on to Passion Pictures for further treatment. In order to give the videos the recognizable Gorillaz look, much of the footage had to be 'animated'. As usual, the filming was not to go without incident . . .

Murdoc: I thought the video was great. Apart from the fact that a couple of coppers followed me down to the set. Bastards pulled me over just before I arrived and nicked me for having half a gram of pink whizz in my pocket. Parlophone managed to bail me out 'cos we had the video to shoot, and luckily enough I had already strapped the other half gram to the underside of my yozzer. Then we were just about to shoot the close-up on the bass and the bloody bag split. I'm paralysed from the waist down! So, 'Sod's Law', I'm in the middle of a sea of beautiful ladies, on the big shoot for the next Gorillaz video and I can't move a muscle. So next, what happened was . . . er . . . sorry . . . What was the question?

Andrew Ruhemann, Passion Pictures: The video, which was the most technically complex to date and took twelve weeks to make, used a fusion of drawn and computer animation, painted backgrounds and treated live action. All the animation was done in-house at Passion Pictures where co-director Pete Candeland directed a team of 35 animators, designers and compositors.

Murdoc: Anything else?

Neil Riley, Visual Effects Supervisor at Passion Pictures: For the live action performance from De La Soul, a camera on a body rig was attached to the performers to achieve some of the distorted perspectives of their faces. This footage was treated at Rushes to create the lens flare in some of the shots. All these elements were composited at Passion Pictures using After Effects.

Murdoc: Hmm . . . Yeah. Great. Actually, it's probably best if we cut out all that geek rubbish and go straight to the good bits. So where were we? Oh, yeah! De La Soul!!! '60ft high and rising'. It was great that they could appear in the video, laughing their great big faces off. I thought the screens look wicked. I like the way De La Soul look like something off 'Poltergeist' or the Japanese film 'The Ring'. Really ghostly, man!

Russel: De La Soul came over from the States to film their bit, but I get the feeling that they had been inhaling nitrous oxide on the plane over. They wouldn't take it seriously at all, they were just giggling their heads off, goofing around and picking on 2D. But again, what they gave us came out really well.

2D: As in the song, I am seen to be repeating the mantra, 'Feel Good'. I think this works almost like I'm convincing myself that everything's OK. Or maybe that I'm, like, brainwashing myself to believe it. The truth is too horrible to face.

Murdoc: 2D's such a lightweight. Before we shot this video I'd been up for five, maybe six days. I'd been in Paris with some mates. I was on a roll – looking good, feeling sexy. Playing bass like a demon. He went out for 20 minutes the night before and just look at him. Killer comedown. He looks like . . . a trapped boy . . . Well. Actually, I guess that's what he is in this video. I dunno, maybe he's just a great actor. Doubt it, though.

Noodle: There are so many elements in this that I'm really very proud of. The way the island descends through the clouds is so graceful. It's quite moving. The way the wind blows the grass, and you can see each blade moving, is wonderful too.

Murdoc: Well, apart from the obvious thing, which is my gyrating hips I'd have to say, the coolest thing would be the hydraulics on this gig. Just the windmill section alone cost about £3.5 million. That's sterling. We had to buy a small island, make a mould of it and then scrape out all the insides. When that was done we filled the whole thing full of helium. Using the motor from the windmill we managed to get the thing to float, but it was an absolute bugger.

Russel: Passion Pictures worked so hard on this film. It all looks seamless to me. They did a lot of work on the windmill. Apparently it took a real long time to airbrush all the strings out. The whole thing was filled with gas and we needed to keep tryna stop it from floating away. I was told it was originally used on the set of 'James and the Giant Peach', but I think people may have been messing with me.

Murdoc: When were having a lunch break a bunch of these kids, little sods, broke onto the set and started mucking about on the island. The thing floated off down the Thames and we had to get the fire brigade to bring the thing back. Apparently one of the kids ended up in traction. He had held on for about three hours, floating around, but eventually let go and fell about 200ft, before landing in a big pile of boxes round the back of some supermarket. His parents tried to sue us, could you believe it? Sue US! So we just sent a couple of the Gorillaz stage hands round to straighten things out. Everything's fine now.

2D: Murdoc was playing up so much when we were filming. He acts like some dark messiah, with a little crowd of worshippers at his feet. Anyone with any real soul would see right through his antics, but because they think he's got something they want, they just lay themselves at his feet. Sycophants; the worse he acts, the more people suck up to him.

Murdoc: Unlike 2D, though, I don't see this as a bad thing. Hey. We've all got to have role models, you know. It might as well be me.

Noodle: Many people in life seem drawn to the more insane figures, who throw their weight around, seemingly oblivious to the effect that they have on people's feelings. Maybe they see this attribute as a sign of strength. However, I believe it's a downward spiral in which everyone gradually has their soul eroded.

2D: Murdoc's such a poser. In the video he was thrusting his giblets in front of the cameras. Tart. He wasn't asked to do that at all.

Murdoc: I've never been anything other than 100% professional, mate. And you can just see the results when you play the video back. Anyway, if the director shouts 'Action', that's what I'll give him. Full-on pelvic thrust bass-shagging! See, if you've only got one shot at giving the kids what they want, that's what you give 'em. Get your top off! Strap on a 'Flying V' bass, some tight jeans and show a bit of the old 'in out, in out' action.

Russel: What you see on the screen is actually the toned down version. A lot of Murdoc's performance was actually cut out, for legal reasons.

Murdoc: I thought the footage we got was tremendous. And after the shoot I borrowed one of the 'copters and sodded off to Italy, to go, er . . . shag some Goths.

Russel: It took another three months of intense labour before the delivery date, and even then right up to the deadline Passion, Pete and Jamie were working round the clock, re-lighting, rendering and touching up images.

Murdoc: Whatever. I got my part done in one afternoon. I'm that good. Those geeks down at Passion were probably just flicking rubber bands at each other for weeks. Wasting time. Anyway, there you go. That's how you make a world-class, award-winning video that became the Number One most played of 2005 on MTV. Easy . . .

Noodle: The video was screened at a club down in Soho. Watching the final results of everyone's work made us all gasp. Afterwards we took it in turns to have a go in the helicopters that we used on the shoot.

Murdoc: I used to have a fear of flying, funnily enough, but I conquered it with the skilful application of alcohol. In fact, after six or seven medicinals I usually feel good enough to fly the plane. Actually at the screening party for the 'Feel Good Inc.' video, me and Posdnuos from 'The De La Soul' were cocking about in the helicopters that we used in the video. I was out of my face. The damn thing took off and I couldn't control it. We ended up in Tahiti. I woke up on the shore, helicopter all smashed up. Pos had pissed off, and I had a raging hangover. Felt fine after a good breakfast, though. Caught the next flight home . . . and, er . . . Sorry, where was I?

BELOW

De La Soul with body rig camera on the set of 'Feel Good Inc.'

ABOVE
Noodle's island in the sky

Russel: It was a really smart video, executed perfectly and with a strong overall message. That video did a whole lot of good for us, especially in America. I felt that we had lived up to our own expectations.

However, the helicopters in the 'Feel Good Inc.' video were to return to the Gorillaz camp, the next time with catastrophic results . . .

March 28th 2005 *Radio 1 air the exclusive first play of 'Feel Good Inc.'*

April 1st 2005 *'Feel Good Inc.' video world exclusive on Top of the Pops*

April 17th 2005 *'Feel Good Inc.' enters combined physical / download charts at no. 22*

True to form, Gorillaz were involved in a piece of historical chart controversy. In April 2005, the Official Singles Chart, previously based solely on physical sales, was merged with the download chart to create a hit parade measured by over-the-counter sales plus download totals. The only stipulation was that a single must have a physical product on sale to get a chart position.

Happily, this moment coincided exactly with the release of 'Feel Good Inc.' Always open to a robust commercial debate, Gorillaz decided to wade in with a totally legal, but possibly cheeky, opening salvo. Parlophone issued limited amounts of the 'Feel Good Inc.' 7" before the official release date to ensure that it bypassed the rule stating that singles can only be given a chart placing if a physical release accompanies download.

Murdoc: Huh? How did that happen?

The music industry was not amused and an emergency meeting of the Charts Supervisory Committee was called for April 26th. To smooth matters out, Murdoc issued a typically restrained comment to the press ...

Murdoc: It turned out that because the download charts were combining with the regular charts for the first time ever, our single went Top Forty before it'd even come out. Magic! Are you with me so far?

Look, Gorillaz have always been a band that have lived a lot of our life online, so for us it made perfect sense that we would make a big impact off the downloads, but I guess people in the industry felt we had done something underhand. But, y'know, there was a big opportunity to make a dent in history there. Now whether our record company were aware of that and it was just a stunt to get the record to chart early, I'm not sure. But, y'know, er ... take a guess.

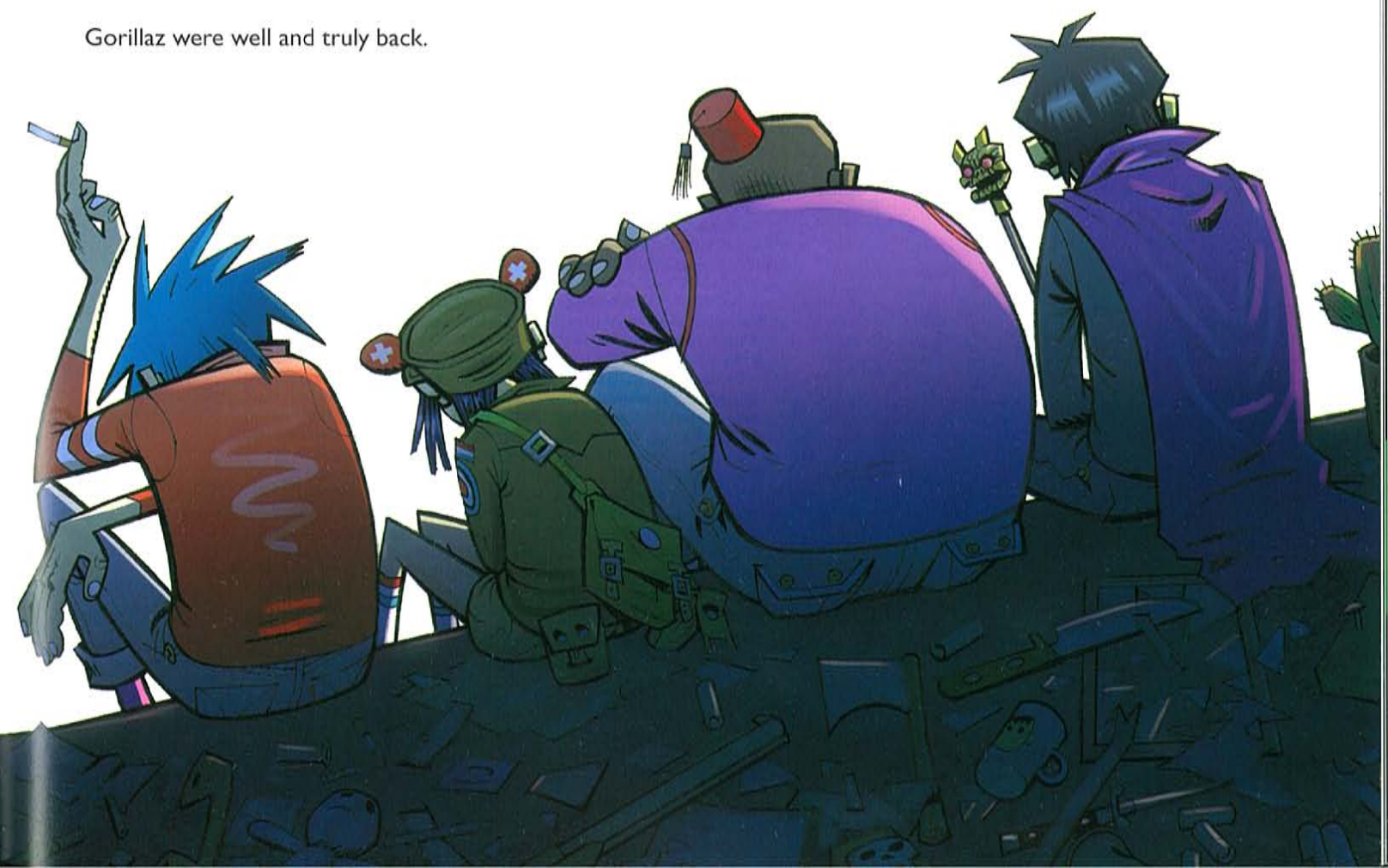
Anyway, either way that week was a historical chart and Gorillaz were the first band ever to chart from downloads. This is what the record business is all about. A little ... creative initiative. So excuse me while I just plant my great big fat Gorillaz flag right here in this chart-sized crater and once again claim this little historical landmark placing all for our very own. One small step for mankind, yet another great big leap for Gorillaz. God bless us all!

May 9th 2005 *'Feel Good Inc.' official release*

The 'Feel Good Inc.' single remained in the UK Top Forty purely on downloads for four weeks before its official release, on May 9th 2005, at which point it rose to Number 2. It was kept off the Number One spot on May 15th by a vanishing act called Akon. 'Feel Good Inc.' remained in the UK charts for five months to come.

Despite a three-year hiatus from the musical landscape, it would seem that the Gorillaz appeal was untarnished.

Gorillaz were well and truly back.



Tales of the Unexpected: The iPod advert

OPPOSITE
Gorillaz, Ladbroke Grove, 6 a.m.

Across the pond, 'Feel Good Inc.'s ascent of the charts took a rather more unusual route. Fitting neither into the nice neat strict category of 'rock' or 'rap' meant that the song was in danger of being overlooked for both radio playlists. The genre-splicing style of Gorillaz appeared to have caused them to fall between the two stools.

This didn't stop listeners from placing a million nuisance calls into stations across the States, repeatedly requesting that the track was played. Then something happened that brought a whole different level of attention to Gorillaz' snazzy little rap 'n' roll tune.

May 2005 *'Feel Good Inc.' features on Apple's iPod adverts*

In early summer of 2005, to coincide with Apple's global iPod campaign, a deal was struck to allow Apple to use the 'Feel Good Inc.' track on their worldwide television advertising. This boosted the profile of Gorillaz no end and became another valuable shove for the subsequent 'Demon Days' album avalanche of sales ...

Russel: The reality was that I think that with 'Feel Good Inc.', despite it being such a great record, the US radio stations were a bit slow at first, because they didn't know which genre to place it in. Perhaps also people were afraid of backing it, because we'd been away for so long. There was still this feeling left over from the first record that Gorillaz were maybe just a novelty. Why should they support the second album? It felt maybe the knives were out against Gorillaz.

Murdoc: Do you know how many pairs of boots I've worn through kicking fools in the backside? No matter how many times you spell it out, the very next time you've got to go through the whole procedure all over again. Just tedious. 'TRUST ME. I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M DOING.'

Russel: But once the iPod ads came out, and people got into 'Feel Good', the fuse was well and truly lit. The whole thing exploded all over again. This time round it was an even bigger bang. The Apple adverts really helped with getting our track out there.

Nudged along by the iPod commercial, the constant phone calls from fans, and blinding research results, the track rocketed its way up the charts. 'Feel Good Inc.' stayed at Number One in the US Modern Rock Radio charts for nine weeks, selling over two and a half million singles, including downloads, worldwide. It would remain in the Alternative Radio chart Top Ten for 31 weeks.

Murdoc: Yeah, amazing what you can do with a couple of dancing shadows and a snappy tune.

Noodle: We allowed Apple to use 'Feel Good Inc.' as the soundtrack to the iPod adverts for a number of reasons. One of the main ones being that the iPod is one of the most important innovations to happen in the history of music. It may seem small, but the butterfly effect of this gadget is immense. The ability to create portable playlists coupled with downloads, means that creatively the audience now expects a much higher quality of music. There's now no room for lazy album filler tracks. It has changed the way people listen to or select music, and therefore how it is created.

Murdoc: How much did Steve Jobs pay you to say that, Noodle? Tart. Anyway, corporate 'money laundering' aside, I wouldn't endorse a product I wouldn't use. And y'know, iPods certainly do rock!!! *(Suspicious sound of money changing hands in the background ...)*

British Rail
Danger
DANGER
REJECT
FALSE
MESSIAHS!

'Demon Days' released

The gob-stopping 'Feel Good Inc.' video had proved that Gorillaz had again stretched themselves, technological capabilities and the possibilities of what a band could do. (There seems to be some kind of crazy pattern forming here.) After setting these standards the world now awaited with feverish expectation the new long-player release from Gorillaz.

Murdoc: Yeah, all the usual stuff; human pyramids forming outside record shops, people in hot air balloons attempting to break in to the warehouse where we stored the discs, kids crawling up internet lines trying to smuggle out tracks. Some bloke shot himself out of a giant catapult to get into Kong. Yup. All the usual Gorilla-based bollocks.

The rumours of new benchmarks, higher ambitions and greater goals had swept their way around the globe. Had Gorillaz really changed their sound? Was the album just a late cash-in on the success of the first? Could a novel gimmick really repeat the success of the first, or was this just an easy way for all the ageing collaborators to get down with the youth under the guise of hanging out with the old new kids on the block; a bunch of ego-driven rockstar doodles?

Or, maybe, just maybe, had the band defied the critics and proved their point in true style: Gorillaz were a whole new valid creative force that could re-define and re-justify their existence with every new release.

Great big chubby round Russel: Doing it once would have been a gimmick. Doing it twice proved that Gorillaz had legs. We were for real. It was important not to make the second album referential to our success, or even relative to the first album. The first time it was about creating something new. With 'Demon Days' it was more about proving that what we created and put into motion had a lasting value. That our Gorillaz sound, sensibility and insight wasn't . . . a . . . flash in the pan, here today gone tomorrow sensation. We'll just have to see how good we are seven albums down the line. Most great bands and crews tear themselves apart real soon. But the real trick is to tear yourselves apart . . . and then put it back together differently . . . better.

Murdoc: 'Demon Days' is bigger, better . . . *badder*. We wanted to make an album that would climb out of the speakers and *eat* the listener.

Russel: 'Demon Days' is just another big solid step in our march. Everyday I feel like I'm waking up more, stripping back another layer of my mask. Getting closer to becoming the . . . real Russel.

Noodle: Damon Albarn has said our new album is 'the world in a state of night-time'. In a sense he is right. With the Demon Days being upon us, some of us are losing more of the morning by living more in the night. The balance needs to be re-addressed.

The title 'Demon Days' has many meanings. In one sense, the Demon is a disease and the disease is an absence of thought, a state where people make action without consideration.

The moment we live in has agitated this slumbering giant, the dormant illness. These are the Demon Days, and the land it stalks is on the cusp of a thick fog. Therefore, in another sense it is time to become the Demon. A time for an action, made with less contemplation, but from a disciplined and considered instinct. Strike with perfection and effect.

As with Shodo, the art of Japanese calligraphy, the calligrapher must strike the paper with the brush in order to express the heart and the soul in its most truthful instinctive form. A single expressive action. The legibility of the characters is of secondary importance to the spirit and vitality that they express. The action captures the essence of a moment in time.

Likewise, as we face the challenges of living in a time and culture where sense and the senses are over-ridden by the sweeping, unthinking gestures of the most ignorant of souls, we must in turn make gestures of pure intention, sensitivity and instinct . . . of balance. These are Demon Days we exist in. We strike to capture the moment. And hope to contain it, in a balance.

May 23rd 2005 *'Demon Days' album released worldwide*

Gorillaz handed in their global homework, a generational pop milestone in music and technology. The initial marks looked good. Many of the suspicions or reservations expressed critically towards the first Gorillaz album evaporated, with the creative ingenuity now being whole-heartedly applauded. The maturity and growth of the music had made the other sides of Gorillaz' presentation a far sweeter pill to swallow.

Murdoc: Piss off. 'Sweeter pill to swallow'? That's all the good stuff, you dick. Anyway, the key to our success? I would say that it's down to a number of things. My superb bass playing, the incredible songwriting and the razor-sharp image that makes up the whole Gorillaz package. Though if you really ask me to pin it down to a single solitary reason, I would probably have to say it was because of the watertight deal I made with Satan. Beelzebub himself. 'Faust' is in fact my middle name.

Murdoc has always maintained that the image that Gorillaz present is a pivotal part of their success.

Murdoc: Of course. As the Clash said, 'Like trousers, like brain'. Meaning if you dress like a turd you probably sound like one and think like one too. It's not an effort for me to dress like a military Satanist sex-god, it's just in my big bad blood. There's no stylist in the world who could create an image like mine. This look I'm rocking is pure Dr Strange! Tight jeans, some gnarly-looking boots, razor-sharp hair and a designer cape with an expensive lining. It's killer! Kinda 'Victorian Opium-Eater' meets 'East End Thug' with a little Marvin the Magician thrown in. Now, that's a look! I look wicked, man. Well evil.

To be absent from the spotlight for that amount of time, in a culture that moves so rapidly, where not only bands, but whole genres, rise and fall in less time than it takes to make a duff remix, technology and the internet were reshaping and redefining the entire way a band operates. Could an old band on a chunky record label still cut it?

Russel: That's the most liberating thing about the way Gorillaz present themselves, we can do pretty well anything we want.

Murdoc: Unlike any other band on the planet. I mean, who wants to listen to a 'Plodcast' from Coldplay? Seriously. Even if you're so damaged that you're actually into their life-siphoning records, you don't really need to log on and check out the extras, do ya? Whereas Gorillaz can actually make a pretty unique stab at any medium we choose to work in. Makes you sick really, doesn't it?

Rather than be swept beneath this technological tidal wave, Gorillaz were on top of the crest, riding the curl, while unleashing a collective giggling battle cry.

The Gorillaz album naturally came with another flurry of online crap, interactive goods, enhanced CDs, mobile applications, grommets, gadgets and holographic cup holders.

Murdoc: Yeah, we were kind of born for this era. Lucky that, eh?

Noodle: It is the music that is number one, however. Irrespective of the changing times all good music, like good art, is ultimately about describing the human condition; a comment or expression from the soul. The celebration, the doubts, the fears, the hopes and the fractures. It's about the human soul.

And she should know. Noodle is well aware of what sets Gorillaz apart from a million other 'real' bands, treading a well-worn path from hope to obscurity via mediocrity.

Noodle: For many groups and artists there is a desire to add to a tradition or a history of music, rather than stand apart from it or advance it. They seem happy just to be in a band. For them, that is enough. The security comes from the closeness of impersonation.

Murdoc: Anyway, aside from all that, I was just having a couple of mid-morning refreshments, settling down with the papers. Imagine my surprise when I opened them to find this:

'Demon Days' Album Reviews

Relative to the first Gorillaz album, the editorial critiques matched the maturity of the album with an equally more considered and deeper appraisal of the work.

The Guardian, 13th May: 'Demon Days' goes boldly against the current trend for brash immediacy and instead repays time and effort on the part of the listener . . . Amid the dexterous conjunctions of styles – 'Feel Good Inc.' switches between folksy indie strum and grimy bass rumble – the album positively leaks melodies. There are gorgeous tunes hiding everywhere . . .

Murdoc: Mmmmm . . . lovely.

The Daily Mail, 20th May: 'Demon Days' is an ambitious step forward. Whereas that 2001 debut was dominated by wonky hip hop rhythms, this is a more assured electronic pop collection. Beneath its robotic beats, it also packs a warm, heartfelt punch . . .

Murdoc: Oooh, madam!

Mixmag, June: On first listening you're taken back by the sheer breadth of it. It's bigger and more ambitious than last time around. Fragments of scratchy guitars nestle in beside analogue bleeps and distant, incoherent backing vocals. The pieces tessellate like a psychedelic jigsaw . . . A breathtaking, unpredictable and unhinged masterpiece.

RIGHT
Gorillaz: 'Just four normal people'

Murdoc: I've won a Plasma screen!!

MOJO, June: On 'Demon Days' the generic cross-pollination has bedded in nicely. The result is an aural phantasmagoria – funky, playful but sinister like the best children's stories – soundtracking a vision of a crumbling, exploited world where zombified 'kids with guns' hold sway from North Hulme to Sierra Leone and dead-eyed multi-nationals rape an ancient culture in a lysergic parable brilliantly narrated by Dennis Hopper. Quite astonishing.

Murdoc: Yeeup! I think you're really getting the whole Murdoc Niccals vibe now. Indeed. Quite astonishing.

The Independent, 20th May: Five years and six million album sales on, the stakes have been raised alarmingly for Gorillaz. It's extraordinary, then, that this follow-up should not just surpass its predecessor, but should do so with such a carefree sense of fun and such fertile musical innovation . . .

Murdoc: Cancel my overdraft.

Daily Telegraph, 21st May: 'Demon Days' . . . could lay claim to being the most off-beat and inventive pop sensation since 'Sergeant Pepper' . . . 'Demon Days' is an apocalyptic concept album about mankind's penchant for self-destruction. Its emotional theme is loss, whether loss of innocence, love, or the planet we call home.

Murdoc: Definitely . . .

Attitude, June: A backdrop of multiple, mashed urban genres and sample-delic decoration . . . 'Demon Days' sounds both darkly haunting and gleefully uplifting – no easy trick . . . Everything's up for grabs, but it works an absolute treat.

Murdoc: Aaahh. That's nice.

NME, 7th May: 'Demon Days' may end 2005 as one of the year's most celebrated albums. Before you even consider the sonic and melodic innovation crammed into each of these 15 songs (without any one of them sounding over-produced or cluttered) that repeated listening is a must. There's always something new to enjoy . . . 'DARE' is the finest moment on an album which never drops below total brilliance.

Murdoc: So all in all, a far better response to the first album right across. Excellent news. I'll go phone my tailor . . .

It would appear that the Gorillaz concept had maybe taken a fair few years to sink in, or possibly that having given the world a taste of their wares, once deprived of them, nations all over the globe realized what they had been missing; cast down once again into the turgid repetitive world of McFlys, McPussycat Dolls, McBlunts . . .

Murdoc: James Blunt used to be in the army, you know. Apparently he can kill a tune with his bare hands.

It may be that it was just a better, more focused record. You never know with this type of stuff. Whatever the reason, it was apparent that the world had thrown out its great big arms and welcomed Gorillaz back like a long lost brother.

I mean, what can you do in the face of such progressive reviews? Why, give Sir Shaun Ryder a call, crack open a couple of big cold brewski's, stick his head in a contraption that makes it look about 50 times bigger than it really is, and then film a new pop video.

Murdoc: But who on earth are we going to get to direct this thing? Oh, hang on I've got an idea . . . 'Hello? French polishers? You just might be able to help me out . . . '

'It's DARE'
Shaun of the Dead: The Night Ryder

The second single to be taken from 'Demon Days' was chosen to be the electro, dark-pop, disco classic 'DARE'. This red-shoed dancefloor filler would need an equally avant-garde visual to accompany its predicted shimmy up the charts.

Expectations by this point were so high they could have cleared the Feel Good Tower. I mean, how to follow-up a floating island, a fancy turn from the De La Soul and a tower full of whacked-out groupies? Easy! Make Shaun Ryder the star of your video, film him as a giant, re-animated, disembodied head and add one of the best dance routines ever committed to celluloid. Result: 'DARE', Gorillaz' first UK No. 1.

Murdoc: Mmmm . . . that's my new favourite number.

The final video wasn't the first treatment the band had seen – early drafts that veteran Gorillaz director Jamie Hewlett sent over to Kong had Shaun playing the part of a naked fairy in a musical jewelry box. This idea was rejected as a little arty and possibly alienating to Gorillaz' core audience of sane human beings. As usual, the inspiration for the video came from the track itself. 'DARE' was the great big shiny pop tune at the centre of 'Demon Days', a real get-up-and-go-out sort of song. Just the sort of record that a groovy teenager like Noodle might listen to before hitting the youth club disco.

Jamie Hewlett: 'DARE' was a case of how do you put Shaun into an animated video . . . Because we'd had De La Soul in 'Feel Good Inc.' we had to have Shaun Ryder in 'DARE' and knowing Shaun Ryder we thought, right, we're not going to have him dancing around for starters, 'cos he's not the greatest dancer in the world . . .

Murdoc: Sorry, why would he have to be nude?

Jamie Hewlett: I didn't say he was naked.

Murdoc: You said starkers!

BELOW
Shaun Ryder, 'DARE' video shoot

Jamie Hewlett: No, I said 'for starters'!

Murdoc: Oh . . . OK. (pause) We could have had him in there naked, you know, Jamie. That would have worked . . .

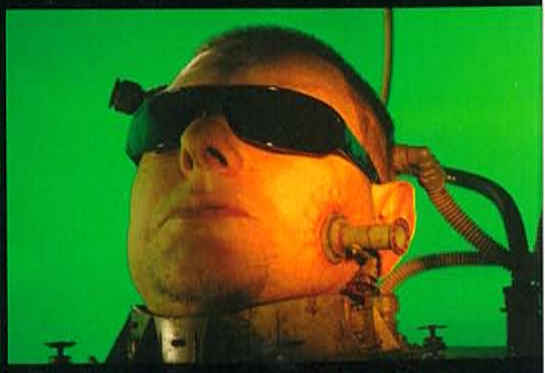
Noodle: The video is shot in my bedroom at Kong Studios. The lighting that they used gives the room a dramatic dark red quality to it. A filmset was built in miniature and then fixed around Shaun's neck to make his head look massive compared to me. It was great fun making the video with him. He was very professional. Although he had to stay inside the contraption for hours on end, he never complained once. In the video we can see Shaun's enormous head fixed into the bedroom floor, and he has all these tubes sticking out of it.

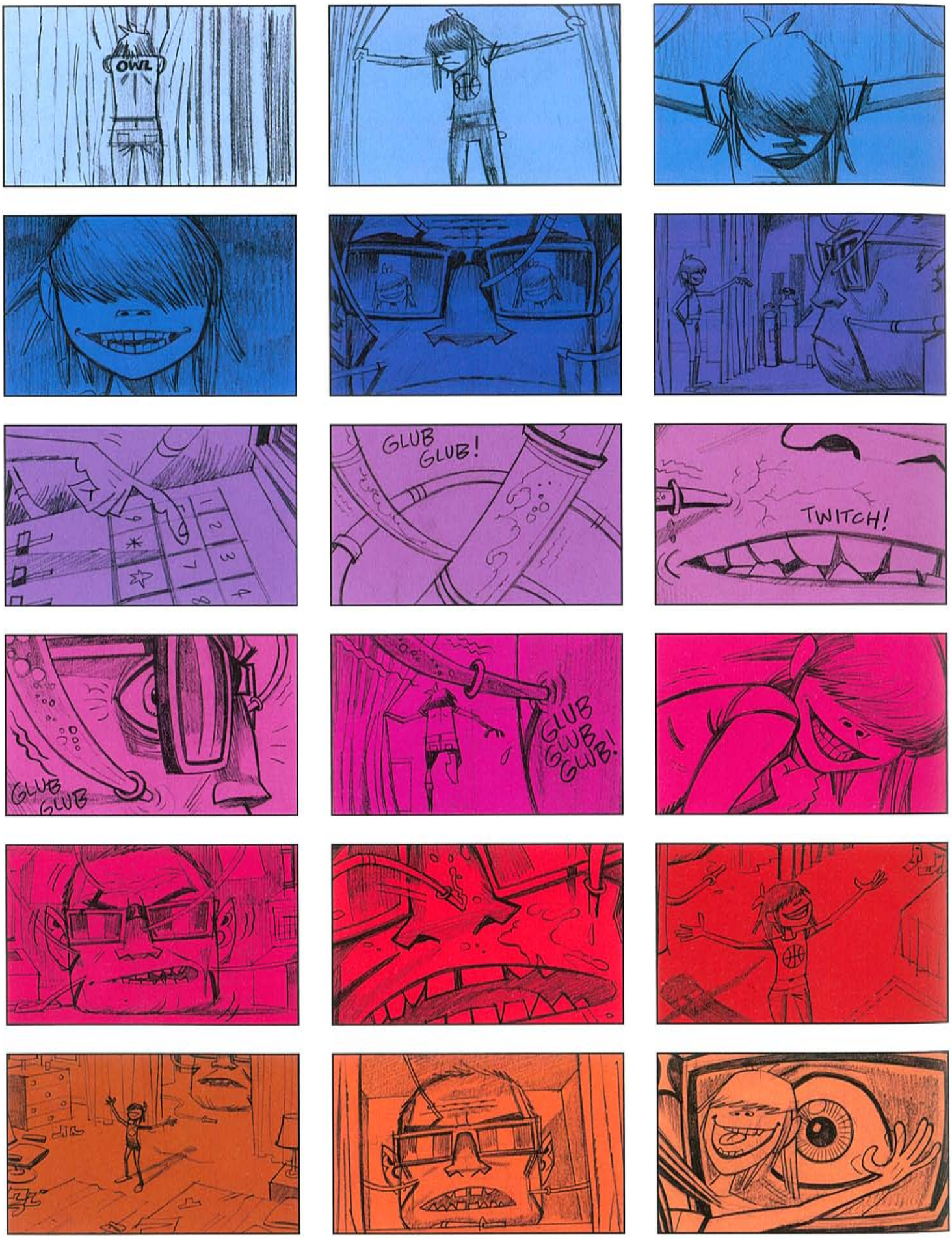
I walk into the room, and as the tune starts, I flick a switch and all the tubes begin pumping various liquids into Shaun's head. The combination of the liquid and the music is irresistible and Shaun comes to life! The music's so good I start breaking out some incredible moves. The sound of the music makes me come alive too and I do the 'DARE dance routine'.

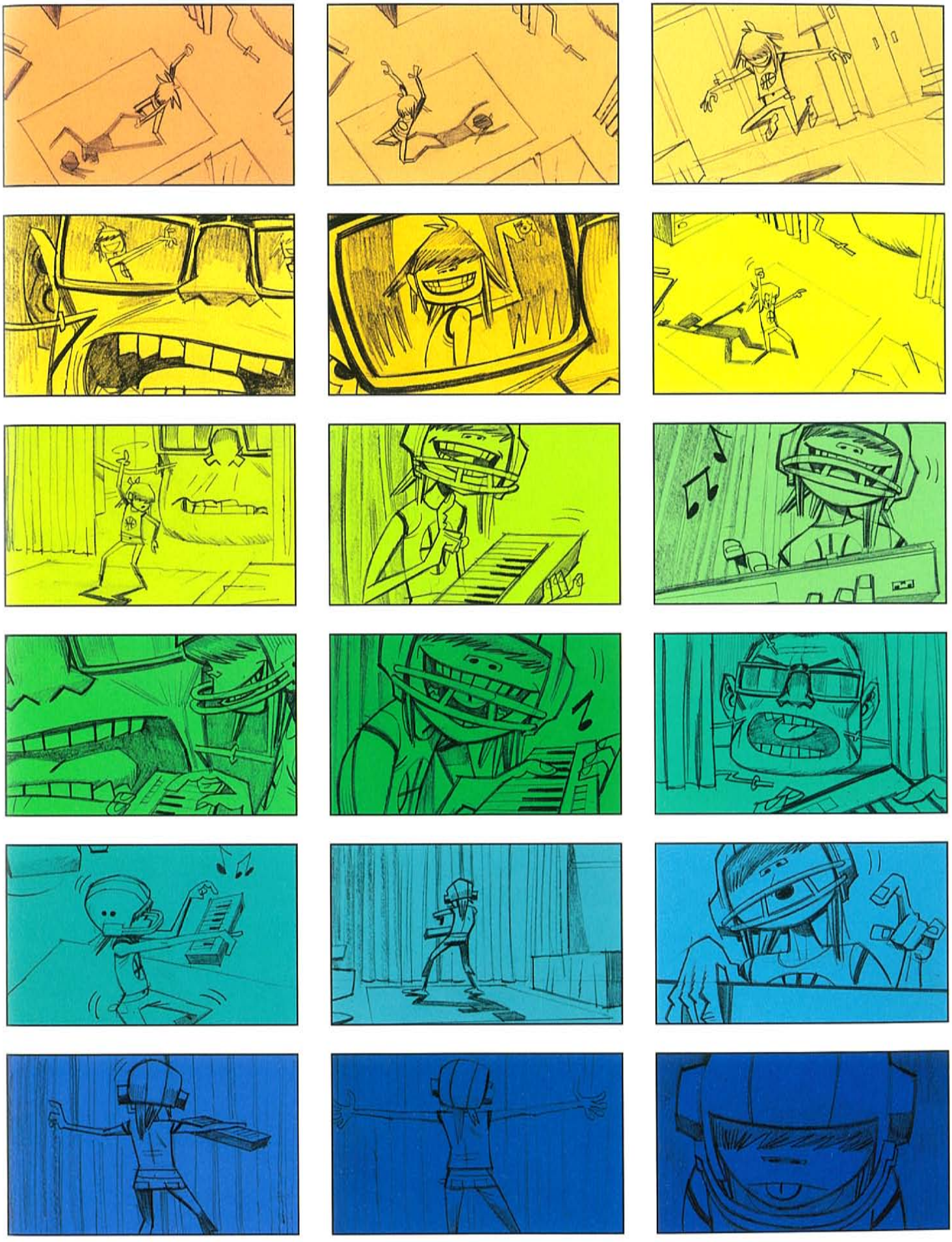
That's when it really hit me that I, Noodle, was in a video dancing in front of the legendary singer from Happy Mondays and Black Grape. And I guess it's moments like these when you feel like . . . this is why you ever wanted to play in a band in the first place. Hopefully other people will see that and get that feeling too.

The models for Shaun's set were built by a model maker whose previous experience included work on 'Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy' and 'The Nightmare Before Christmas', the perfect blend of futuristic and gothic for the Gorillaz ethos. The 'DARE' video was the first Gorillaz promo to fully integrate live action and CG imagery. The startling 'reanimation' effects were done in-house at Passion Pictures.

Murdoc: Help!! One of the geeks has escaped!! GEEK ON THE LOOSE!! GET A NET!




OWL
GLUB GLUB!
TWITCH!
GLUB GLUB
GLUB GLUB GLUB!



Neil Riley, Visual Effects Supervisor at Passion Pictures: We shot Shaun Ryder's performance of the track against green screen which enables us to insert a background behind the live-action person, in this case the hi-tech recording studio, most of which was created in CG in-house at Passion. To keep Ryder's head in one place, we built a neck brace as part of the set. We used multiple cameras on set to ensure that we had shots of Ryder taken from multiple angles, so the directors had the widest possible choice of shots to use in the video, and also to minimize the time he had to sit inside the brace. Despite this, Shaun Ryder was in the brace for 8 hours, and was remarkably patient with us!

Murdoc (making 'Charlie Brown' type noises): Mwh mmah mwah mmmwah mamwha . . . Thrilling. Is anyone actually interested in this stuff?

Noodle: Shaun's big re-animated face starts singing as I dance around the room. I grab various keyboards and play along too. We go through the whole track as I am busting a variety of incredible moves along to Mr Ryder's singing. Then as the song finishes the camera zooms into my eye. This is similar to the image from the Japanese horror 'Ringu', which was re-made as 'The Ring', in America. It is quite a portentous ending signifying that again, maybe there is a darker undercurrent to the golden sound.

The scene suddenly changes, as Mr Ryder wakes up bolt upright in bed and it seems like he has been stuck in a terrible hallucination or a lurid dream. But as he slumps back into bed you can see that Murdoc's in bed next to him. This is double trouble! As Shaun drops back to the pillow, Murdoc whispers to him, 'Go back to sleep, honey'. It's all very cosy.

Murdoc: Arrrrrhhh!! But then I wake up in my Winnebago, my heart's pounding and a car alarm is screaming. It's all been a hideous nightmare. Hideous.

Noodle: But I would have to say that working with Shaun on 'DARE' was definitely a dream come true for me.

Murdoc: Yeah, I mean, despite the harrowing nature of that ending, the 'DARE' video was superb, really sharp. Although I wasn't happy about the fact that Noodle commandeered that video for herself, without telling the other Gorillaz. I mean, the ego on that girl is just unbelievable. Totally out of control.

The presence of the other Gorillaz is indeed limited. 2D is a 'blink-and-you'll-miss-him' cameo, while Russel's appearance is reduced to a snapshot of him on the porcelain potty. The real star of the promo was Noodle's dance routine, an inspired combination of steps, hops and dips that were imitated on dancefloors from Carlisle to Canberra. Top of the Pops magazine carried a cut-out 'n' keep guide for the uninitiated and hipsters everywhere were working the Noodle dance into their club moves.

NEWSPAPER
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GORILLAZ

DEMON DETOUR JUNE 2005

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Chapter 11
The Demon Detour

'Got off the plane to the countryside,
I drove to the mountain and a hole in the ground
There was crack on the corner and someone dead
And fire coming out of a monkey's head'

The Slowboat to Hades

Things were going really well for our fabulous fiery foursome. Better than ever, in fact. 'Feel Good Inc.' had overshadowed even the all-pervasive success of 'Clint Eastwood', replacing 'Clint' as the new Gorillaz signature tune. The album too, through its increased style and depth, had turned floating voters into positive advocates of the Gorillaz mindset. The outstanding reception for 'Demon Days' followed hot on the heels of the dramatic – possibly sensationalist – media coverage of the news that the delay of Gorillaz' album had caused a share slump for EMI. Gorillaz were now acknowledged as big batters in the global music industry. No sideline offshoot or dilettante's plaything, Gorillaz were a full-blooded, runaway, stand-alone success and one that even the most cynical of stonethrowers would have to admit was an unstoppable juggernaut in the pop landscape.

Murdoc: You can choose not to like it, or choose not to get it, but you'd be a fool not to admit it was there. Like a gaseous elephant in your living room, we were making a very big noise.

Yup, everything was back on track. But we can't have a peaceful equilibrium for too long, can we? So to push themselves a little further, and to promote the 'Demon Days' album in America, Gorillaz came up with the novel idea of doing a live tour of radio stations. No screens and no concert promoters. That way, they could deliver their message right across the States without having to worry about the usual constrictions and delays of booking a whole exhausting venue tour.

Russel: I was real nervous about returning there this time after what happened on the last tour. I was still very fragile.

The Demon Detour would be a 40-gig tour right across the US, taking in all major cities and stations. To whip the live show into shape, Gorillaz invited many of the album's contributors down to London's Sarm West studios, where they could rehearse and record the results for quality control.

May 21st – 22nd 2005 *Gorillaz and guests book into Sarm West studios, West London*

As soon as the band arrived at Sarm they began to receive odd phone calls, disturbing messages and eventually blatant death threats. The band acted as professionally as they could and chose to ignore the intimidations.

Murdoc: It was probably just kids, mucking about.

Russel: The rehearsals went real well. De La were on top form, Bootie came down. We knocked out a version of 'Clint Eastwood' with both De La Soul and Brown. A great line-up. We put that out as a B-side with the 'DARE' single.

Murdoc: And we also had the delightful company of Ms Rosie Wilson down at Sarm ... she sang back-up with Ryder on 'DARE'.

Russel: With her voice and Noodle's singing together, it just gave Shaun a whole sweeter space to do his thing. Roots was great, as was Neneh. And it was amazing to hear the album played live at that volume, through the big speakers. Musically we were definitely ready to tour.

At Murdoc's insistence 'The Demon Detour' was to commence on his 39th birthday, June 6th, with the first show airing at 6pm. This gave Gorillaz the 6/6/6 figure that always gets Mr Nicalls so worked up. Obviously Murdoc was back to his old tricks.

Murdoc: The Demon Detour! Eeeevil!!

June 6th 2005 *Gorillaz commence Demon Detour at Seattle's KNDD station*

The tour, accompanied by the various 'Demon Days' artists, initially began as a low-key jaunt to a couple of radio stations but rapidly mutated into a deranged cavalcade, a sixteen silver Airstream tourbus hurricane across the States.

Murdoc: It was always going to escalate. At the start there was about 45 of us, strings, band, choirs, guests all squeezed into this one little car. It was too much after the first week. So we switched to the buses. Then the whole carnival just rolled across America. San José, San Francisco, Atlanta, Phoenix, Boston, Chicago, LA. You name it, we played it. I was knackered by the end of it. Actually, I was knackered at the start of it.

The virtual radio tour got off to a great start. Gorillaz, plus their featured guests, set up in the Seattle studio, accompanied by a string section, a kids' choir, backing vocalists, plus the usual array of percussionists, spoon-benders, knob-twiddlers, playback technicians and knuckle-dragging golems hired to 'fill out the sound'. The band charged through an eight-song set featuring tracks from the new album, throwing in the De La Soul / Bootie Brown bolstered version of 'Clint Eastwood' for good measure.

The concert was received with rapturous applause from the invited studio audience. Most vocal in his appreciation, though, displayed in the form of a very long, slow clap, was Gorillaz' newly-appointed A&R man for their Stateside record company: a man of diminutive stature named ... Jimmy Manson!

Murdoc: No way! I couldn't believe it was him! Wee Jimmy Manson! Do you remember him, Russ? Funny little fellow who came to the house in Hollywood. He was that freak with the eyes that followed you round the room. And he was always playing those terrible songs.

Russel: Yeah, I remember him. Clearly. I think you upset him. Every time he played you something, you walked off or laughed at him. He looked up to you, man.

Murdoc: Hey, listen, the songs were appalling. Negative sub-hippy acoustic crapola. He kept hassling me, saying Gorillaz should record his songs. You wot? He was so desperate to be in music, but you could tell he was never going anywhere.

It was even rumoured that Manson had turned up at the Kong Studios audition to join Gorillaz years back, but was turned away after the arrival of Noodle. Apparently annoyed at his rejection, he'd always harboured a little grudge against Gorillaz, and Murdoc in particular. It was probably water under the bridge now as Jimmy Manson in his new music biz role would be accompanying Gorillaz on their Demon Detour.

Murdoc: Well, he'd obviously wised up and got himself a proper job in the industry. Funny that he's now looking after us, though, on the same record label.

Yeah. Funny that.

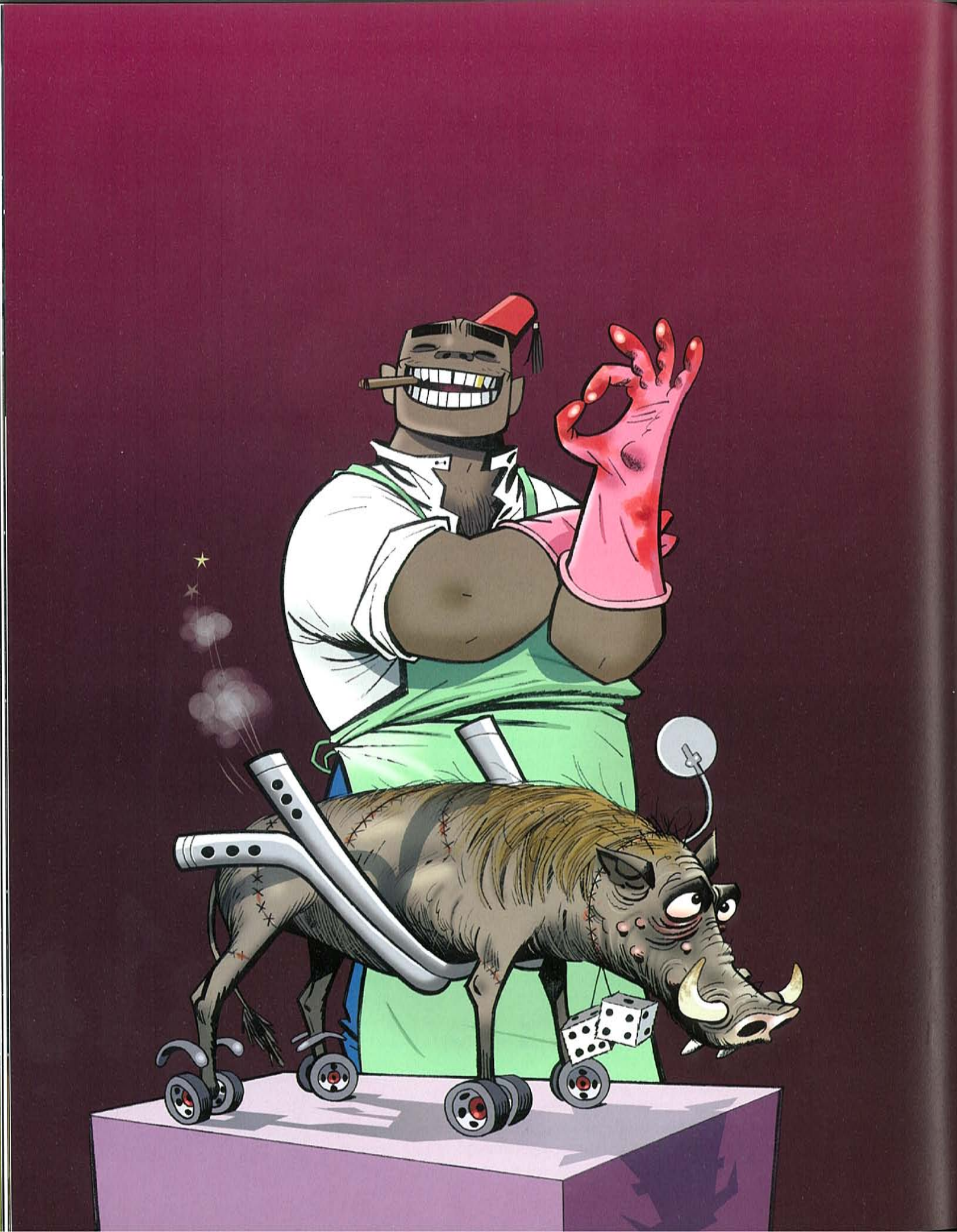
Meanwhile, the touring schedule was put together by a madman. Possibly by Colonel Duffy as revenge for Murdoc's goblin-invoking antics on the previous tour of America in 2002. This haphazard calendar meant that the band were often playing four or five shows a day in entirely different sections of the country. Russel kept his mad mind occupied by busying himself with his animal-stuffing pastime.

Russel: I took the time out to learn about taxidermy. I picked up the bodies of any animals we hit with the tourbus. Since I got into taxidermy I find it's a great way to pass the time and also gives the animals a real dignified ending.

ABOVE
Gorillaz on The Demon Detour
'Chariots of Fire!'
MURDOC NICALLS

OPPOSITE
2D and De La Soul laying down a live version of 'Feel Good Inc.' at Sarm Studios, West London

BELOW
Jimmy Manson
'Never trust a hippy'
MURDOC NICCALS



Murdoc: Are you in some sort of K-hole? There's nothing really dignified about the poses you set them in, Russel. They look really . . . startled.

Russel: I just wanted to break new ground in that area, advance the tradition and bring in my whole hip hop attitude to the taxidermy world. I've been cutting and pasting different animal styles together. Yaks with lizards, hogs and zebras . . . it keeps the whole skill fresh, y'know? Once they're done you can customize the animal with bass-bins, under-lighting, alloy wheels . . . a kinda 'Pimp-My-Rhino' thing.

The Demon Detour virtual radio tour was again a first for the music industry. Instead of the usual downbeat, downplayed routine of a band sloping into a studio to play a couple of acoustic numbers, this was the whole Gorillaz live show, plus guests, hi-jacking the station and knocking out a full set across the airwaves at every station they appeared at.

Often this would be accompanied by an hour-long hand-spun DJ set administered by Gorillaz themselves; rinsing their favourite discs, taking calls, and rapping with the host before disappearing into the night to hit the next radio target.

Behind the slick, well-oiled machine, tourbus etiquette hadn't improved since the American Tour three years previously.

2D: Rule number one. Don't muck about with fireworks in the bunks.

Murdoc: Christ! Touring with 2D literally brings it all back to the days of P.T. Barnum and his travelling freakshow. Seriously, as soon as he steps on board the whole aura of the bus changes from 'Rock 'n' Roll' into 'Special Needs'. You wouldn't believe how soul-destroying it can be travelling with someone with a combination of ADD and verbal diarrhoea. He's like some kind of microcephalic; an adult vocabulary but with the mental agility of a 5-year-old.

2D: After eight hours in a tourbus on a motorway, the tiniest thing can annoy you. After a while I just hope the whole thing crashes . . .

Noodle: Murdoc has the most distasteful hygiene standards . . .

Russel: And the absinthe gargling and endless womanising really is just vulgar . . .

Murdoc: It's better than bottling it up . . .

Age-old complaints aside, you can't beat the life-bonding camaraderie of a tourbus regime.

Murdoc: Hey y'know, touring can be great fun, but if you don't watch yourself it can kind of take you over. You become one of these bands that live like . . . drunken pirates, permanently sailing the oceans of the world, playing . . . drinking . . . playing . . . pillaging . . . drinking . . . playing . . . pillaging. Actually, that sounds great. Where do I sign up?

OPPOSITE
Various Gorillaz assailants: Murdoc's blonde-haired stalker, Alfred C. Klinker, some ugly looking kid, Paulo Skinbacio

The schedule was truly relentless, but Murdoc passed the time by getting chummy with his new Stateside promo dude, Jimmy M.

Noodle: You seemed to form quite a friendship with Mr Jimmy Manson, Murdoc. I thought you didn't like him.

Murdoc: I had some important business to attend to, love. But it was nothing more sinister than that. Honestly.

2D: That tour was weird. Every station we went to we had to introduce ourselves, introduce the track, then make a joke with the wacky guy from the radio station. Play the track. Then more jokes with the comedy DJ. I just felt I was being laughed at for weeks.

Murdoc: That freaked them right out. They thought they were playing along with the whole 'it's a cartoon band' thing. Then we walk in, full beam. There was one guy who was so scared that he wet his pants. Still, it was great to rock around the States meeting all these guys who've supported our band, spinning our discs.

Unlike the American Tour of 2002 when Gorillaz were still an unknown proposition, the Demon Detour was organized and monitored with strict precision. PR companies had been employed to ensure that the more maverick or brand-damning elements of the Gorillaz enterprise went unreported. Inside the bubble, however, bullets were flying. Quite literally.

2D: Yeah. On top of all the comedy promo stuff, we had the added excitement of being constantly shot at.

Yes. Levity aside, once again the agents of chaos were conspiring against our intrepid musicians ...

Russel: Just as I predicted. Taking the Gorillaz experience to the States again brought back all the trouble we thought we'd left behind.

On the road the band and tourbus were under random assault and sniper attacks from an unseen enemy. Weirdly, Russel had also begun to notice that the distinctive smell of sulphur seemed to be present at every radio station they arrived at.

Russel: I told you that little Demon kid spirit was trouble. He was trying to kill us.

Murdoc: Calm down, Russel. Just remember to keep telling yourself: *'I am a mental case, I am a mental case'*. The apparitions will soon disappear, I'm telling you.

2D: Our bus was tailed by a mystery car. We couldn't see who was in it, but then we started getting our windows shot out. It turned out that this mad sniper was some wailing banshee that was obsessed with Murdoc. It didn't matter how many times we changed vehicle, this blonde beast still tracked us down. Then we found out that Murdoc had got her pregnant during a mad three-day bender several years previously ...

Murdoc: That wasn't me, sunshine, it was Steve Coogan. I never touched her. I wouldn't. Her band's rubbish.

Murdoc seemed strangely unperturbed by these incidents. Gorillaz did contact the authorities,

but they didn't take the threats particularly seriously either. *'A virtual band with a mystery assassin? Sleep it off, buddy.'* The group themselves drew up a list of possible suspects, but it proved too long to be of any use.

Russel: By this stage, you might just as well have opened the phone book and picked out a name at random. It could have been anyone.

The mayhem continued when a lighting rig collapsed inside one of the radio station studios, missing Noodle by inches.

Russel: I saw the shadow of that Black-Skinned Demon Boy creeping around behind the doors, scurrying up corridors. His little forked tail just flopped out of bunks. Whenever I looked out the tourbus window I could see that thing gazing back at me with his sinister blank stare. Or just grinning.

Murdoc (tapping the side of his head): You're not in Ike's basement anymore, Russ. Keep it together. We were under attack, but not from a demon child sprite . . . Anyway, that kid's alright. You just have to get to know him.

Among the other prime suspects were Paula Cracker, the original guitarist, who had long since harboured a grudge, especially against Noodle. Noodle also began to suspect that the success of Gorillaz and her elevated worldwide profile had finally come to the attention of her old Japanese government bosses.

Murdoc came to the conclusion that it might even have been the reappearance of his old man. Murdoc's dad had recently featured in the papers, painting a portrait of a neglected father, left abandoned, uncared for by an egotistical, ungrateful son.

Murdoc: The swine's after my dough and that's it. Actually, without a next of kin, that sod would probably end up with it if I was dead. I wouldn't put it past him to try and bump me off.

Jacob Niccals was not the only character from the murky depths of Gorillaz' past to re-emerge.

2D: I bumped into Paulo Skinbacio outside the place in Philadelphia. That gave me a fright. But he just wanted me to sign an album for him. So I did, and he left.

Murdoc: Talking of talentless directors, it was about that time that we saw the movie director Alfred C. Klinker at one of the aftershows, clutching a script and giving us the evil eye. I mean, if he's gonna take that kind of attitude, y'know, he's never gonna get that film made.

2D: I bet it wasn't a script. I bet it was a load of blank paper.

Murdoc: Yeah, you're probably right. Pffhh! Hollywood? They can stick that silver screen right up their jacksie, I tell you. The place is full of poseurs and morons. As long as something's in 'pre-production' you can get away with doing sod all for months. Sitting around having meetings, discussing potential budgets for scenes that'll never be shot. Big . . . waste . . . of . . . time. Give me £10,000 and a video camera and I'll shoot a couple of home movies that will knock the spots off anything those dead-head studio-types could ever dream up.

Murdoc lights another 'Lucky Lung' cigarette and takes a long draw. Blows it out.

Murdoc: Probably be an eighteen certificate, though. But this pressure, and the lengthening list of suspects, I mean . . . *Someone* was trying to knock us off. Our bus was broken into, we found scorpions in our shoes, mystery fires broke out when we were playing . . . . Before the soundcheck at 'Texas WIKZ53 crapola.com' or whatever the hell those hillbillies call their tinpot station, a couple of shots were heard just outside the venue. The authorities swooped in and saved our backsides in the nick of time.

Russel: Someone called Grassy Noel was arrested outside the concert. He was found positioned on an outdoor lighting rig. He had a sniper rifle. We had to call the show off.

Murdoc: He turned out to be just some crazy hippy who thought that Gorillaz had 'sold out' by being cartoons, like when Dylan went electric or something. He thinks it's all a gimmick. But he's just living in the past.

However, when the appearance of helicopters above the radio stations became a regular event, they began to suspect they were dealing with someone maybe a little more organized than a lone oddball. The conjecture was that this 'Grassy Noel' character might have been a patsy, a stoned stooge for the American Government. Gorillaz were now a big massive band who mouthed their loud gobby opinions off of the pages of every magazine. With the ripe minds of America's kids open to their crackpot ideas and raised voices of dissent, could it be that Gorillaz were getting too big for their boots? Could someone 'higher up' be trying to put our Gorillaz stars out of action? Shut these popstars up for good?

I mean, it could happen.

Murdoc: You see, we are Gorillaz: biggest thing on the Internet, biggest thing to cross over to multi-media, bigger than Jesus, bigger than Satan. Bigger than Christmas. We weren't just a band now, we had become a global industry. People listened to what we said. I could see why a government would want to shut us down.

2D: I don't know why we're always the target of such a large amount of violence, but y'know, we're cartoons. I can't think of a single cartoon off the top of my head who isn't under constant attack.

Noodle: Never a dull day!

However, even after the arrest of Grassy Noel, the life-threatening incidents continued and with the band having to travel enormous distances in the shortest amount of time, the speed of the tour was taken up several notches.

Murdoc: I gotta point out that we were still playing at premiership level at every station. But I don't think anyone slept a single hour throughout all 40 dates. The combination of the gigs, the travelling and the constant sound of gunfire meant that sleep was removed from the agenda.

Russel: I used to find the long-distance drives pretty relaxing, a chance to just kick back after gigs. But it's different when you're going over two hundred miles an hour.

Murdoc: Oh, man. It was like Herbie goes to Hell out there.

Russel: I think it showed a great dedication to the music on our part that we finished the tour.

Murdoc: And when you're cramming that much into your day, your diet just goes out the window. You end up living on fast food junk. I almost choked to death once. I was sitting there scoffing away on some chilli Jack flame-grilled alloy nonsense from a well-known burger chain, when a mouthful of 'Freedom Fries' became lodged in my throat. I turned blue. They're quite hard to swallow. Fortunately, Russ punched me on the back hard enough to dislodge the blockage, which shot out across the room.

Murdoc turns to Russel.

Murdoc: I never thanked you for that, Russ. You saved my life.

Russel: I didn't know you were choking.

The mounting chaos caused by the assassination attempts finally managed to penetrate even Murdoc's thick, green skin, and he decided to take the matter into his own hands.

Murdoc: You know, I'm up for a laugh, but by this stage things had just got too wacky, even by Daffy Duck's standards. We were supported at one of the shows by that band of animated copycats, 'The Dopplegangerz', *'Virtual band, actual rip-off'*. I thought we'd sued those clowns into obscurity years ago. And now these people are on tour with us? Very suspicious. So I thought: I've had enough of this. I'll take the situation in hand. During one of the 30-second windows we had off I went to see Mr Jimmy Manson over at the record company offices. I told him straight that they needed to sort this whole situation out. We're Gorillaz, man, they can't afford to lose us. Whatever was going on, I wanted it finished now. And within about five minutes there I had a pretty good idea of who was doing this, and what was going on, so I just made arrangements to have the whole thing put to bed. And almost immediately the assaults stopped.

Russel: Record companies are very powerful nowadays. Those guys obviously carry a lot of weight.

Murdoc: Which coming from you is a big compliment. But yeah, all the trouble ended at that point.

2D: Well, almost all of it.

Murdoc: 2D. Getting your sandal trapped in a drain doesn't constitute an assassination attempt. OK?

Gorillaz were able to honour their commitments and complete the remainder of the Demon Detour in relative peace.

June 22nd 2005 *Gorillaz complete last date of Demon Detour at San Francisco's Live 105, and return to England*

Russel: I noticed on the flight back that we were being tailed by two helicopters . . .

BELOW
'The dashing and devilishly charming Sgt. Niccals.'
MURDOC NICCALS

Dirty Harry
The Dust Up in the Desert
'I love it when my quotes are blown up really big'
MURDOC NICCALS

With the harrowing events of the Demon Detour seemingly behind them, Gorillaz returned to England to continue with the 'Demon Days' promotional commitments. Summer 2005 and the project was still gaining momentum; 'DARE' dominated the airwaves and the video was in permanent rotation

on every music channel. Before 'DARE' was even released, Gorillaz began mapping out what would become the video for the third single, 'Dirty Harry'. The filming for this one would take Gorillaz out of England and over to the sun-baked plains of Africa.

Murdoc: I think some nerves were a little frayed after the Demon Detour, but to be honest I thought all that was just funny. As I said, obviously I did have to put an end to all that blunderbuss rubbish, but you know what? At least you can say it wasn't boring. All those murder threats kept the whole thing well spicy.

Russel: I was a little rattled by what happened back in the US. So for the 'Dirty Harry' video shoot I thought I'd disguise myself by growing a handlebar moustache and maybe wearing a fez.

Murdoc: Yup, that'll do it. No one's gonna recognize you now.

'Dirty Harry' was a touchstone for the album's creation and one of the defining themes of the record. It had initially been the band's choice for a first single, but tracks with 'guns' anywhere on the lyric sheet made American radio stations and record execs nervous. The original storyboards that featured pistol-toting infants had been scrapped. Approaching the video for a second time, the band focused more on the uplifting spirit of the track for ideas.

Russel: 'Dirty Harry' is an anti-war song, or a pro-peace track depending on how you look at it. So we had to think of a way of making a video that wouldn't get banned, because of all the anti-war messages in there, but at the same time we wanted to put the message across, otherwise you wouldn't be doing the song justice. And we wanted it set in a desert, what with the situation in Iraq and everything. Also we'd managed to do what we needed with the computer-generated elements in 'Feel Good' and 'DARE' so well that Jamie did suggest Passion could build a CG desert and drop us into it. But then Pete Candeland said it would be much easier to fly the whole Gorillaz crew out to a desert than it would be to make a CG desert. It would be cheaper and easier.

Murdoc: The truth is cheaper than fiction.

The production was scheduled for Swakopmund in Namibia, south west Africa.

August 8th – 11th 2005 *Gorillaz shoot 'Dirty Harry' video in Namibia*

Russel: After the chaos of the Demon Detour all of us could have done with a break but we had to keep pushing onwards, and try to not get brought down by those weird few weeks.

The entire cast and crew were shipped out: Gorillaz left Kong's permanent pissy drizzle and landed amidst 35° sunshine in the middle of the sand dunes.

Murdoc: It was hotter than Hammersmith in the middle of summer. I was sweating like a murderer the second we got off the plane.

The track's guest star, Bootie Brown, flew in to Namibia from the States to

join the Gorillaz gang. Not all the arrangements went smoothly.

Russel: Everyone had their trials on that shoot. We had to change planes in Johannesburg, and when we got there the airport was just rammed and somehow Bootie Brown and Greg, his manager, took a wrong turn somewhere in the airport. They found themselves going through immigration rather than just changing planes directly onto the connecting flight to Namibia. Then they got stuck in a queue and had a fight with immigration and missed their plane completely and got stuck in Jo'burg. The production team had a hell of a job getting them on another plane. They turned them away at the airport. It just got ridiculous.

Murdoc: They should have given me a call. I would've sorted out that stuff in a jiffy.

Russel: And then even when they did get on the plane there was still trouble. We were told that they were landing at Swakopmund airfield. But when we turned up to meet them they just didn't turn up. So we're checking our watches, going, 'Where are they?' Eventually we get this call from them and they're at a completely different airfield. The charter plane had just decided to land somewhere else! Madness.

When everyone had eventually assembled, there was just time for a small amount of sightseeing ...

2D: Walvis Bay was a really strange-looking place. Sort of a 'Germanic'-style village. You kind of imagine someone like Augustus Gloop's family would live there. Which is a bit odd for South Africa.

Shooting promos in Africa would of course come with its own set of idiosyncratic problems. Firstly, unknown to the band, the Armoured Personnel Carrier hired from the Namibian Army was pulled moments before the band arrived.

Russel: The costume that Brown was in for the video was genuine WW2 that we'd brought out from London, complete with all the accessories: hip-axe, boots and everything. That was all good. The APC truck was another story. We didn't find this out until way afterwards but we'd had an APC on order from the Namibian Army, all sorted out and fine, but the day before we flew to Namibia the army pulled out, turned round to the production company and said, actually, no, we're not interested in doing this. The production company knew they had all of us appearing in a day and no vehicle.

Murdoc: Don't worry, kids. I'll handle this one ...

... but not until after a quick celebratory get-together.

Murdoc: Yeah, on the first night we got there we had a bit of a crew / band bonding session before the next day's shoot. I was there until, like, six in the morning. After that I was so off my head I just felt awful. I was crawling around the desert floor, trying to find somewhere to crash out. I'd drunk too much of this stupid, er ... 'snake beer'. I thought I was gonna die. That's when I saw this vehicle parked up. So I crawled into the front seat of this vehicle thinking it was a Red Cross truck. I was gonna demand that whoever was in it take me to hospital immediately, because even by my standards I thought 'I've definitely overdone it this time'.

This truck-owners turned out to be less benevolent than a first aid crew.

ABOVE
2D goes topless for the 'Dirty Harry' shoot

OPPOSITE
The 'Dirty Harry' shoot

Murdoc: Suddenly, right, there's all this banging on the side of the truck. I'm surrounded by all these army geezers!! Carrying great big military shooters! So I lock the door, bend down, hot wire the truck and get the hell out of there, quicksmart. The soldiers were shooting bullets at me, trying to get me to stop, but I thought 'Sod it'. I just drove off. Laughing and beeping the horn. I headed straight, by accident mind, for the video shoot location.

When I got there everyone's going 'Hey! Nice truck! Perfect. Just what we need'. So, I made out I'd hired it off some local, kept schtum about the other stuff and took all the credit. I just figured if the army ever caught up with me, one of those poncey video directors would sort it out. Make some calls or whatever they do. So that's how we got the truck for the shoot. And the funny thing is, because of all that, I felt fine again. Sobered me up nicely. Just in time for first orders.

Russel: I never knew that, Muds. You could have got the whole crew in big trouble with that stunt.

Murdoc: Oh shut your face, everything worked out fine. You worry too much, Russ.

So with the band, guest star and a kid's choir assembled and an armoured personnel vehicle procured, the shoot began in earnest. 2D felt the script called for a little nudity ...

2D: I took my shirt off 'cos I was, like, well hot. But seeing as Murdoc turned up with the first aid truck, I made sure I used loads of suncream. I was using a factor 83. Anyway, I don't burn ... I just kinda bronze, really.

ABOVE
'Dirty Harry' video shoot

Murdoc: Mate, you go bright pink. Like an embarrassed lobster.

2D: Well, I also thought seeing as Murdoc was topless in the 'Feel Good Inc.' video, I'd give it a go. My body's way better than his anyway. And I don't have the paunch.

Murdoc: No. But you do have the torso of an eight-year-old girl with rickets. I'd keep that figure under wraps if I was you. You'll blow your whole cover.

The video opens with panoramic desert shots, expressing the vastness of the open plains. 2D's pistol-holding hand comes into view and he shoots off a flare. This signal to the other Gorillaz causes them to spring into action. They start up their rescue truck and head over to the source of the flare. 2D, surrounded by the crew of children, awaits the arrival of the Gorillaz liberation squad.

2D: To keep them amused while waiting for the other Gorillaz to pull us out of there, I start banging out a tune on my portable keyboard.

Murdoc: What did you play them?

2D: 'Dirty Harry'. The tune we were shooting the video for.

ABOVE
Noodle popping out of a tank

The children, a bunch of local kids, had been drafted in to mime the vocal parts on the track, and play the parts of, well, kids. The children's faces light up as they start singing along to 2D's choppy keyboards. 2D bops his way through the juvenile throng until the song hits the chorus. To the sound of a backward screech, the camera sweeps over to a desert dune spot, out of which the fully uniformed figure of The Pharcyde's Bootie Brown bursts, unleashing his humanizing soldier rap.

Russel: The heat meant it was a grueling shoot for everyone, especially Bootie Brown. The directors had him buried under a canvas and several buckets of sand waiting for the music to get to the right point for him to burst through. The first time he did it there was too much sand on it, and he got about a foot out before the sand just collapsed back onto him. He was just stuck, still buried under this big heap of desert. There was a nurse on standby, but when Brown emerged all he said was 'Let's go again'.

Murdoc: Bootie Brown was a proper trooper in every sense of the word. I don't think I'd put up with being buried alive for some cartoon video.

The shoot continued and all four Gorillaz played their parts exceptionally well.

Russel: So in keeping with the feel of the song, Gorillaz come to pick the kids up; an attempt to rescue them from the inevitabilities of war.

As the kids begin to board the reconnaissance truck, 2D is shown making a 'flying-bird' sign, a tip of the hat to the film 'Napoleon Dynamite', one of 2D's favourite movies.

Murdoc: Anyhow, in the video we manage to pick up all the kids, scoop them up and stick them in the rescue van, and drive off. Lo and behold, the truck breaks down literally about 20 yards after saving all the kids. We were gonna re-shoot the escape rescue scene because of that, but then we left it in. It came to kind of symbolize a kind of unsuccessful 'peace-keeping' mission.

2D: Lastly, we shot a load of desert otters, dancing along to the track.

Russel: They're stoats, actually, D, not desert otters.

Noodle: Sand weasels, I think you'll find.

Murdoc: You're all wrong in fact. They're Namibian dune ferrets, I smuggled them in to make it look good, like a proper desert.

Having filmed the (ahem) meer cats, the video shoot was wrapped. Murdoc returned to the hotel, knackered after his long day of promo shooting in a desert decked in full military gear. He was not to get a peaceful night's sleep.

Murdoc: I got attacked in the middle of the night by a snarling, raucous, two-headed beer-swilling sex beast called 'The Brangelina'. Apparently it was new to Namibia, but had been found making terrible frightening noises in hotels at night. It would break into rooms and smash the gaff up whilst intermittently ordering room service. Pretty, but very scary, like a crazy siren beckoning you onto the rocks. That's Namibia for you. Full of surprises. Still, I got some sleep on the plane back to Kong.

August 12th 2005 *Gorillaz return to Kong Studios, UK*

2D: One thing I thought was strange, though. Every time I turned round, Murdoc's chatting and whispering with Jamie about something. He was being really secretive. Every time I asked Murdoc what it was about he just kind of brushed it aside. He wouldn't tell me what was going on.

Murdoc: It was none of your business.

Back in England, Jamie, Pete and the crew at Passion Pictures began the task of assembling the Namibian footage into another zany Gorillaz video.

Jamie Hewlett: Originally the truck was going to the Red Cross. But the Red Cross said if you use our symbol we'll sue the arse off you. And we said, what if we make a donation to your cause? And they said 'No, we're not going to associate ourselves with any one brand or product'. They have a policy of being neutral. The symbol stands for protection and neutrality. They can't be seen to be pro or anti any one side. And then we found out they'd sued James Bond 'cos a few James Bond movies had used it, and they sue loads of people and they're always very successful . . . so we turned it to a green cross and then we found out we couldn't use that because it was some kind of pharmaceutical company in Italy . . . we turned it into a black cross and we couldn't use that. It was a real nightmare and it ended up being a grey cross because nobody had used a grey cross yet. The CG guy had to go back over every single shot and colour in the cross. He wasn't very happy about it. There were, I don't know, 50,000 frames or something.

Murdoc: I was hiding in a cupboard over at Passion Pictures, spying on him. When he got to frame 49,996 I burst out and demanded that he change the cross to a kind of 'magenta-y pink'. I live for things like that.

So while the Passion Pictures crew got down to the lengthy job of tidying up, editing and once again re-colouring all the film, the crazy kooky Gorillaz gang had a couple of corks to pop . . .

LEFT
Extra kids for the 'Dirty Harry' shoot.
'Just in case any of the first lot burst.'
MURDOC NICCALS

ABOVE
Shaun and Noodle on the set of 'DARE'
'Er . . . That's the back of Shaun Ryder's head.' 2D

DARE Released

August 29th 2005 *'DARE' gets its UK release.*

The random array of chart competition that week came from Murdoc's ex, Jessica Simpson, Cpt James Blunt, Les Rhythmes Digitales, the lovely Ms Rihanna, a whole spew of ringtone based rubbish and a new band called Oasis.

September 4th 2005 *'DARE' enters UK charts at No. 1*

Murdoc: Ta da!!!

The combination of a copper-bottomed disco smash and the extraordinary video, directed once again by Jamie Hewlett and Pete Candeland, meant that the record-buying public were powerless to resist. 'DARE' was catapulted straight to the top of the UK charts, giving Gorillaz their first No. 1 single. This also marked a 'number one single' first for Shaun too, no less. From his time in the Mondays and Black Grape, Shaun Ryder had always been one of the UK's most affectionately regarded figures and it was clear from the success of this colourful collaboration that this was still the case.

Murdoc: It was a great moment. To celebrate, I had one of my friends beaten up. I opened up my address book, closed my eyes and just sort of picked one out randomly. After that I sent a couple of heavies round to, like, mess him up. I was watching from behind a tree. Really funny. They grabbed him and then just shook him for ages. Till he was sick. See, success doesn't bring happiness. Only material stuff like money, cars and iPods can do that. And I've already got all of that. So I have to find other ways to amuse myself.

Noodle: I was thrilled! Even though 'DARE' had been written to be a part of the album and not specifically as a single, for it to go to number one, with Shaun, and the excellence of the video, the whole combination was really exciting to me.

Murdoc: Yes. It gave me a nice warm glow inside.

'DARE' blasted out from every car, nightclub and building site throughout the UK.

Murdoc: That's also true. I checked.

Further celebrations were limited to half a glass of warm cider, though, as Gorillaz were offered a couple of opportunities, both of them too good to turn down. Once again, time to think fast. If only it were possible to clone Gorillaz. If only . . .

Manchester International Festival

This is a good one, check this out.

The Manchester International Festival was a newly assembled organisation that, under the direction of Alex Poots, the former director of Contemporary Arts for the English National Opera, would be creating and hosting a brand new cultural event that would run biennially.

The work they sought to commission would be specifically created for the Festival by an extraordinary shortlist of the world's most celebrated and innovative artists, and carefully commissioned from across the spectrum of the arts, popular culture and music.

The Festival would be launched on June 28th 2007, and in order to raise the profile of the event, they would be commissioning trailblazer events to run prior to this date.

Murdoc: I'm lost.

In short, Gorillaz had been asked personally if they would consider kicking off these series of trailblazing spectaculars. The offer also included funding for Gorillaz to perform in whatever manifestation their wacky little imaginations could conjure up.

This was an opportunity too good to pass up. But now Gorillaz were double-booked as, since returning from the 'Dirty Harry' desert debacle, Gorillaz had been working intensively hard on an eye-melting live show to be unveiled at the MTV European Music Awards. Both events were scheduled for the same dates.

Gorillaz came up with the perfect idea. They commissioned a bunch of top crack musicians to perform the 'Demon Days' album in place of Gorillaz.

Murdoc: I came up with that idea in about twenty seconds. I looked at it like this: What we do is classic, so why not get together a Gorillaz orchestra to perform it? From start to finish, as a complete body of work. You could look at it like a great orchestra performing the works of, say, Beethoven. And also these gigs were gonna be the only 'Gorillaz Approved' renditions of the entire album that people could see, so it was as close to the genuine article as you were ever gonna get.

Gorillaz contacted Damon Albarn, with a view to him putting the live band together. He knew the album pretty well, and would possibly be able to assemble some decent musicians to re-create it.

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ABOVE
Shots from outside The Manchester Opera House

Russel: With our guidance and help from Damon's network, his management team at CMO – in particular Niamh Byrne and Hannah Claxton – and the Festival team we managed to put together a great group of people, and got commitments from pretty well everyone who'd played on the album to appear in Manchester.

Murdoc: The way I looked at this gig was kinda like the Pope giving his blessing to another Parish. And I guess Albarn was a natural choice to lead it. I mean, he sounds like a dead ringer for 2D.

The dates were set for the first week of November. Logistically, the event snowballed into a mammoth task of co-ordination. The location for the event was the Manchester Opera House, a beautiful and grand theatre building in the heart of the city. The context of the seated theatre instantly set it apart from your average rock show. This 2,000-seater venue wasn't graced with the most accommodating of stages, however, when considering the amount of performers involved.

To authentically reproduce the album, there would need to be a string section, a full gospel choir, a children's choir, backing singers, guitars, bass, drums, piano, keyboards, turntables, archers, percussionists, backline, monitors and more all crammed into the same space. Then there had to be room for the guest stars themselves. All of this would have to be achieved while still leaving space for a specifically designed visual show.

To execute this overly ambitious task, the planning had to be done with military precision.

September 19th 2005 *Demon Days Live Manchester shows announced*

October 3rd 2005 *MIF tickets go on sale, all nights selling out in an hour*

Buoyed up by the sell-out reception for the show, rehearsals for the Demon Days Live shows started in earnest the following week at The Grove studios in West London. The rehearsals, led by Albarn, sought to bring every nuance, every shadow and highlight of 'Demon Days' to the stage. The Gorillaz band members were called in to give their musical help and medical advice as and when their schedules allowed.

The team of musicians assembled included Morgan Nicholls, ex-Senseless Thing and Streets bass player, Simon Jones and Simon Tong, both ex-members of The Verve, Darren Galea, ex-Jamiroquai turntable merchant and rumoured to be a cohort of The Space Monkeyz, multi-limbed percussionist Karl Vanden Bossche, Blur stalwart Mike Smith, somebody's answer to Rick Wakeman, who would double up as both MD and keyboards, and lastly a truly world class drummer, Cass Browne, a mouthy genius whose name frequently eludes me.

Murdoc: Bastards.

Under Gorillaz' big-handed guidance, the musicians were expertly trained to reproduce the 'Demon Days' album. The absence of any actual Gorillaz in the show didn't mean that the superlative visual edge that was the band's hallmark would be missing – far from it. Gorillaz visual supervisor Jamie Hewlett was brought in to devise a stage set that would showcase the collaborators and the band and bring the much-applauded Gorillaz' visual sense to the proceedings.

October 10th 2005 *Gorillaz win two awards at the Q awards – Best Video for 'Feel Good Inc.' and Best Producer for Damon Albarn and Danger Mouse*

October 25th 2005 *'Dirty Harry' video premiers online at Gorillaz.com. The track is the third Gorillaz video in a row to go to Number One in the video play chart – pipping Madonna's 'Hung Up' to the peak spot*

The city of Manchester had now become a fervent hive of expectation. Every hotel bed in the city was filled with musicians, guests, collaborators, crew, record companies, media and more. What little extra accommodation the city could provide went to ticket-holders. Every bottle of champagne had a note on: Reserved for the Gorillaz Posse. Every seat in the house was taken. The pressure was unbelievable. Could Demon Days Live possibly deliver on these expectations?

October 30th 2005 *The Demon Days Live band arrive in Manchester to perform a stage run-through of the set with visuals*

November 1st 2005 *First night of Demon Days Live in Manchester*

The buzz had been building for weeks. Manchester was in a state of frenzy over the visit from Gorillaz' tribute act. Trucks lined the streets outside the Opera House, bringing in all sorts of junk: instruments, amps, recording equipment, vibe-o-matics, generators, applause machines (just in case), clean towels, crisps, booze, flyspray, wigs and lightbulbs.

Autograph hunters and fans hung around the stage door just to get a glimpse of the elf who tuned the piano. Wild parties were thrown in each corner of the city every evening in the week leading up to the shows, just to get the atmosphere right for opening night.

Murdoc: Imagine what it would have been like if it had been the real Gorillaz! They know how to make a man feel really welcome in Manchester.

Pressure? This lot demand it on the rider.

They had an assemblage of some the greatest musicians the world has ever known. They had a support crew second to none, working flat out. They'd had training from Noodle, 2D, Russel and Murdoc. And they were recreating 2005's most celebrated long-player, 'Demon Days'. It was a sure thing.

At 7pm the doors of the Opera House opened to let in the throng that had gathered in the chilly November evening on Quay Street. The crowd was a heady mixture; media liggers, rabid fans, TV crews, cool kids and local partygoers. An unlikely combination, but that night the audience chemistry was perfectly balanced. When they took their seats and the lights went down, 2D and Murdoc were there to gauge the levels of hysteria and anticipation.

Murdoc: Yeah, our little tribute act pulled in quite a crowd, didn't they? I think it's proof of the magnetic attraction of that one magic word: 'GORILLAZ'. Even 2D and I were persuaded to nip up the M1 to check it out.

Unable to resist stealing the limelight from the band, Murdoc and 2D indulged in a spot of grandstanding from the royal box before the show had even begun.

Murdoc: Yeah. Me and 2D went along to check this thing out, hurl abuse and stuff, just so the audience understood this was an official Gorillaz-stamped gig and not a bunch of freeloading amateurs cashing in on the Gorillaz name.

This unseemly nonsense was followed by a Daffy Duck short.

2D: Well, would you want to be the support act for that show?

Murdoc: So the line up that night was Gorillaz-style Muppet Show, Cartoon, Gorillaz Tribute Act. You won't see that kind of thing very often. Seriously.

Time to get down to the proper business.

After months upon months of planning, rehearsing, scheduling and a meltdown of mobiles the moment had arrived.

As the curtain was raised on opening night, the spooky netherworld outlines of the performers were displayed. With dramatic backlighting, the identities of the mystery musicians would remain shrouded, in keeping with the signature mode of Gorillaz delivery.

Murdoc: Yeah. All the main musicians who played were in silhouette. 'Silhouette' had just split up and most of that lot were unemployed, so we managed to pick 'em as a job lot.

Russel: You must've spent months thinking of that line.

Murdoc: I have to say, I still haven't got it bang on. I'll probably tighten it up for the revised edition of the book.

What happened over the next hour on that first night was genuinely incredible.

The audience, the band, the crew, the media and even the puppets could feel it.

Although every aspect of the event had been individually rehearsed, from the guest performances running with the band, to the backing tracks synching in with the visual show, and the band co-ordinating with the choirs, until this moment live in front of the audience no one, performers included, had ever witnessed the performance running together from start to finish in its entirety.

The show opened with the 'Demon Days' track 'Intro', the mood set by a series of dramatic apocalyptic images that played on the vast screen held above the blacked-out musicians.

'Last Living Souls' saw the nocturnal crew shake to life for the moody doleful dub.

By the third number, to a roar of recognition out of the murky darkness, Neneh Cherry shimmied into the spotlight to deliver her downbeat vocal on the dark cagey rumble of 'Kids with Guns'. 'O Green World' was mauled into a far bigger beast than the album version, accompanied by the newly assembled Manchester Community Gospel Choir, who had been expertly put through their paces by choral director Wayne Hernandez.

A school of children opened up 'Dirty Harry' before Bootie Brown appeared to throw out his rap, in turn giving the signal for the kids' choir to mutate into a bunch of underage breakdancers. The audience were out of their seats, and remained so as De La Soul's Maseo let rip his trademark unhinged laughter line, introducing the Gorillaz' giant 'Feel Good Inc.' hit.

Then the crowd were back in their seats for the melancholic 'El Mañana'. A piano was wheeled into the spotlight position, as the Demon Days band fell into the heavy blues of 'Every Planet We Reach is Dead'. Moments later, the legendary figure of Ike Turner sashayed over to hammer out his end-of-the-world keyboard routine.

The audience themselves transformed into Hacienda clubbers as Manchester's favourite son, Shaun Ryder, accompanied by Rosie Wilson, lurched his way charismatically through 'DARE', a tune the city appeared to have adopted as its own anthem.

As the whole event unfolded it became obvious to all that something magical, something unexpected, and to be honest something quite odd was happening; a landmark was taking shape.

A show that had been arranged individually piece by piece, was slotting together magnificently, and was growing in an electrifying way. The performers, recognizing their part of the puzzle, understood that what was being presented on stage was about no single individual, but was a message of unity. Egos were left at the door, as each player respectfully played their role then made way for the next artists.

Again the Gospel choir resurfaced for the last three numbers. As the closing choral of title track 'Demon Days' rang out, the curtain came down. The result: chaos in the theatre. This small, intimate audience had played witness to a real achievement.

After an appropriate pause, the curtain was raised once more for the encore, and now the stage had been redressed to hold a Chinese zither played to a heavenly level by the Gu-Zheng musician, Zeng Zhen. Damon Albarn, until then just another shadowy silhouette, took centre stage to accompany the zither player on the track 'Hong Kong', a Gorillaz track written for the War Child album 'A Day In The Life'. This gentle and most musical number underpinned the evening, expressing

a cross-global understanding, a moment of reflection and hope in an uncertain era of change. The whole mix of influences seemed perfect; easy, simple and complete.

Russel: You could see it. As no one artist was carrying the show, everyone just delivered then fell back to the side to watch the show unfold. Kids mixed with choirs, strings mixed with scratchers, legends mixed with zithers, all shooting for the same result. No one could really have planned it. It took everyone's breath away. The performers were as much a part of the audience to this event as anyone else.

The abstract suggestions made by the visuals, coupled with the graceful and skilled delivery of the melodic message, meant that the entire evening possessed a sense of beauty, of gravity. People in the audience were left in tears. I kid you not.

The Demon Days Live experience had taken the viewers on a journey; celebrating, commiserating, suggesting fear, suggesting hope, introspection, jubilation, hedonism and constraint, giving warning yet ultimately offering optimism before the curtain descended.

Despite the convoluted and obtuse route this project had taken over the years, here amongst the experiments, the mishaps, the in-jokes, the misguided tours, the half-finished animations, discarded demos or online antics, there was a complete picture of humanity, of joy, of frailty, of unity and a sense of communion.

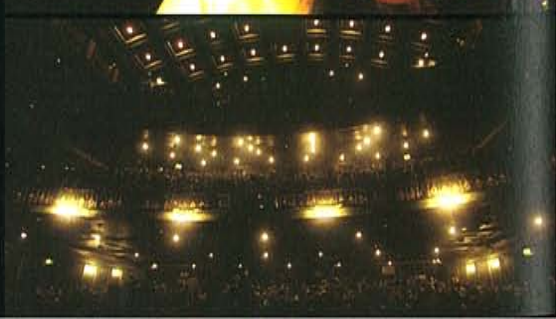
The performers that night were aged from 7 to 73 and beyond, if you include the magical and deeply touching guest spot from the recently departed Ibrahim Ferrer, delivered via video footage of the Cuban singer recording his original vocal for 'Latin Simone'. The artists and contributors spanned genre, gender, age and the globe.

Russel: Music, real music, is an expression of love; you chose these sounds, rhythms, beats, triggers, because you connect, you love them. Trying to divide music by country or continent is just, well, incomprehensible. The expression varies from place to place, but the heart of it is the same.

Maybe an animated band had been the way to initiate the process, but at the vital moment the animated band, true to the Gorillaz' ego-defying ethos, knew when to step out and take a back seat, allowing their human counterparts to deliver a more flesh and blood interaction.

Murdoc: A real live boy!

Moreover, if the evolution of the band hadn't been so odd, unusual and awkward, possibly this moment could never have happened. If Gorillaz' first achievement had been 'Demon Days', the enterprise simply wouldn't have worked. It would have been like starting a book at the twist without ever revealing the set-up. This way, audiences had grown with the project; its characters, its mistakes, its collaborators and counterparts. It had to start with a seemingly random, almost



nonsensical set of components in order to allow witness to the eventual assembly of a more measured conclusion.

As it was, the opening night in Manchester was perfect. Everything worked. An absolute vindication of everything that had gone before. That night, the band performing under the moniker 'Gorillaz' neglected to include any mention of 'Clint Eastwood', the song that had kicked the whole phenomenon off, yet its omission went completely unnoticed by all.

The way the concert was received critically was unusually, almost outlandishly good, summating that this fusion of visuals and music, talent and ambition had been something that performers had attempted for years to create, unsuccessfully, until now.

Daily Telegraph, November 2nd 2005: What was it like on the night? In a word: extraordinary. Top performers have struggled for decades to find a comfortable marriage between sound and vision, but here they were perfectly matched.

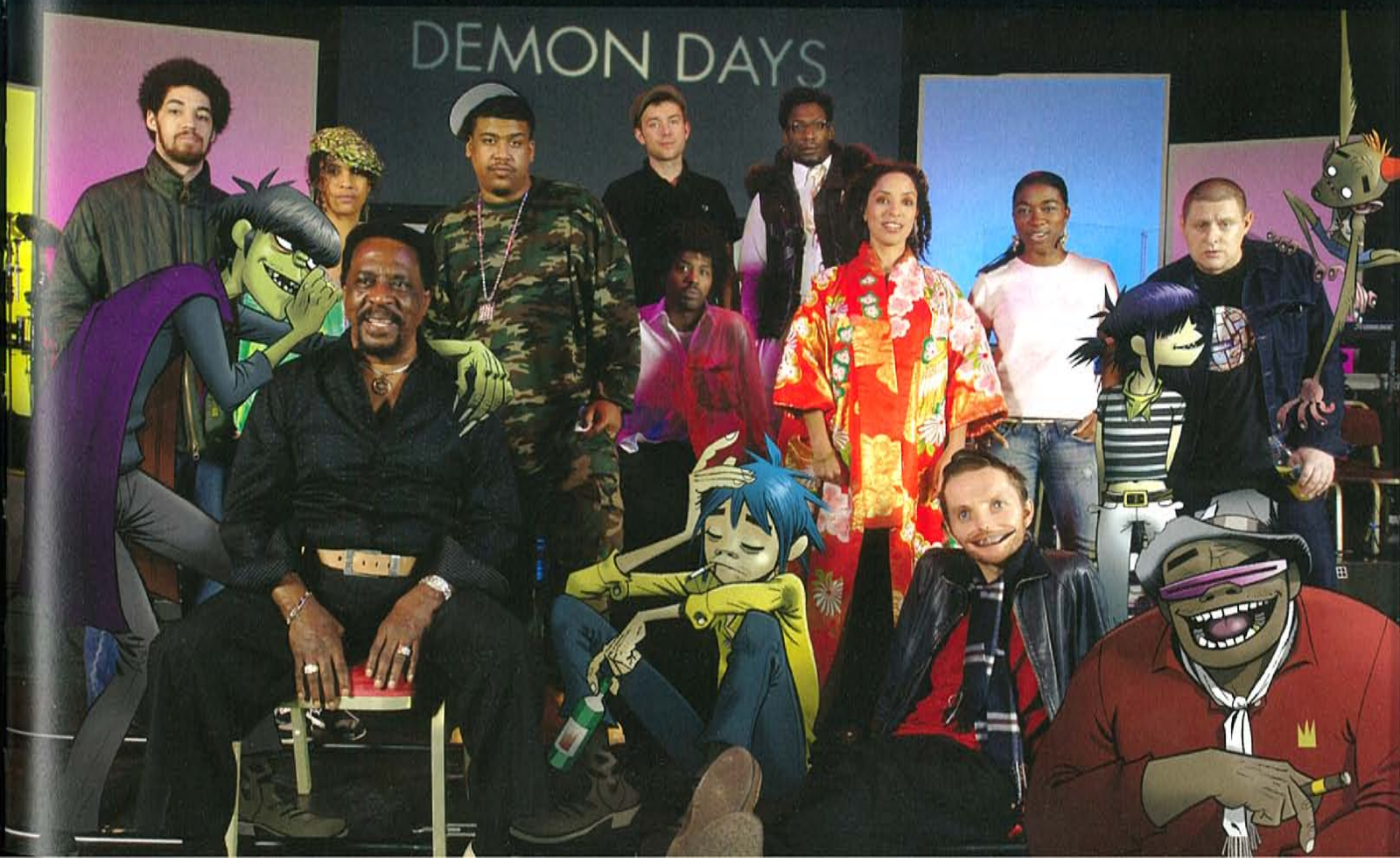
Uncut, January 2006: It could all have fallen squarely on its collective arse, but the result is little short of staggering. Imagine a futuristic mash up of 'The Sound of Music', surreal panto and 'The Last Waltz' and you're still not close . . . The ultimate manufactured pop group brought to dazzling, playful life.

Mixmag, January 2006: Demon Days Live has etched its way into UK gig history . . . best gig of the year, no contest.

Daily Star, November 3rd 2005: A jaw-dropping triumph. One of the most profoundly joyful gigs you're ever likely to see . . . Glorious from start to finish, Demon Days Live simply can't be missed.

Sunday Telegraph, November 6th 2005: It takes 80 musicians and singers working in shifts as an many behind the scenes to recreate this year's Gorillaz album 'Demon Days' in a way that properly represents its epic vacancy, stunned intensity and melancholic glam. [An] intimate but monstrous avant-Broadway sub-Vegas extravaganza.

Comments duly noted, over in Lisbon another equally demonstrative experiment was being played out.



ABOVE
A pre-visualisation of the Gorillaz stage show, Lisbon
'Sorry, a what?'
MURDOC NICCALS

The EMA's: Live from Lisbon

Things were well and truly under way in Manchester. So with the glowing reviews stacking up in the dressing rooms of the Opera House and the big sticky hangovers kicking in nicely, the band and De La Soul took off from Manchester airport early on the morning of Thursday 3rd November and landed later that day in Lisbon for a whole new kind of Gorillaz live experience.

This performance would be the first time the Gorillaz characters would be seen in the flesh. Not behind screens, not on screens, but right before the world's eyes, virtually naked, in front of a real live audience. What's more, two of the De La Soul boys would appear alongside our Gorillaz stars, to perform 'Feel Good Inc.' live.

The ambitious show was once again a lengthy labour of love, taking more than three months to put together, assembled and executed by the skilled craftsmen over at Passion Pictures.

By the time the Gorillaz arrived, the technical support in Lisbon team had been there for some days, building the stage set, rigging up the lights and testing the sound system. In the venue, the dudes in white coats were in a frenzy of activity putting the final touches to what would be the highlight of the whole huge show.

Gorillaz were nominated for five awards: Best Group, Best Song, Best Video and Best UK and Ireland Act. Only their UK labelmates Coldplay could match that tally – it was one big party for Parlophone in Lisbon that night. The event was hosted by Borat, Kazakh alter-ego of Ali G

creator Sacha Baron-Cohen, and the whole thing kicked off with Madonna's first performance since falling off a horse two months earlier.

Noodle: I thought it showed great stamina for her to be back on her feet and performing so soon after her accident.

Murdoc: So it was good of Borat to introduce her back on to the World Stage via an off-the-cuff transvestite joke.

For Gorillaz, the signs were good. The rehearsals had been amazing and the warm reception for Demon Days Live had lifted their spirits, but even the most confident Gorilla can suffer from nerves before a show.

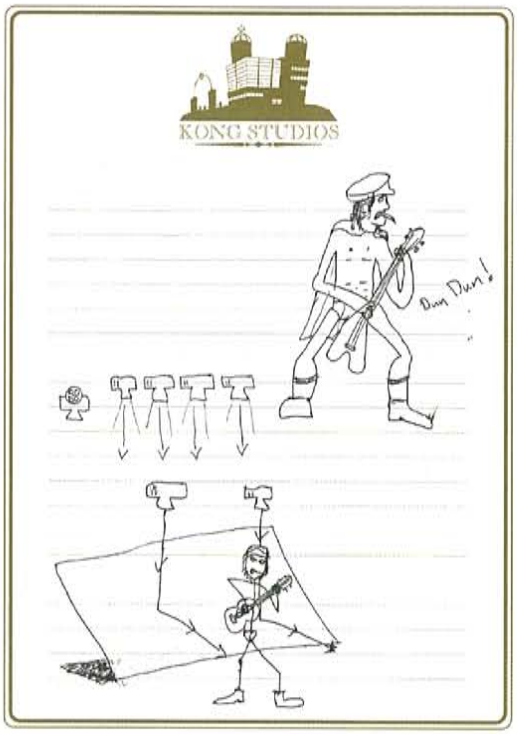
2D: We were backstage waiting to go on and I was so nervous that I couldn't leave the toilet. Actually, I dropped my phone down the lav and it broke. I tried to dry it out during Noodle's guitar solo so that I could send pictures of the show to everyone in Manchester, but all I got was a damp hand and a mild electric shock.

Murdoc: I was so busy putting the finishing touches to my outfit that I forgot to watch the Pussycat Dolls.

2D: What outfit? You were just wearing a nappy.

Murdoc: Y-fronts, mate, not a nappy. And I had a hat on.

The technical team were in an even worse state. Their white coats were looking distinctly grubby after several sleepless nights plugging in leads, taking them out again, moving screens, changing bulbs and testing to make sure the amps went all the way up to eleven. Clogging up the green room backstage was a veritable army of extras bussed in from the grimier areas of Lisbon to recreate the morning-after-the-night-before zombie party-going hordes from the 'Feel Good Inc.' video.



ABOVE
Pepper's Ghost as explained by Murdoc
'Yes! This is Gorillaz on stage. I drew this diagram. If you can't work out what's going on from this, well, I can't help you any further'
MURDOC NICCALS

The Gorillaz EMA performance was to be a never-before attempted fusion of music and technology, a big-budget, high-concept, quasi-holographic extravaganza of light and sound that would bring the Gorillaz show to their audience in glorious Technicolor, with the band rendered onstage in three eye-popping dimensions. It wasn't just the lucky ticket-holders in Lisbon who witnessed the performance: TV audiences world-wide were choking on their pretzels as the band took to the stage. It was that good.

In the next paragraph Murdoc Niccals, bass player of Gorillaz, does his best to explain the intricate technology behind the Gorillaz' EMA performance. Despite the impressive effect the visuals made, the technique is apparently based on a simple old Victorian parlour trick named 'Pepper's Ghost'. So Mr Niccals, please illuminate us ...

Murdoc: OK, heathens. Let me explain how we did our little trickery. A light comes from the front, no ... the top of the stage, and it bounces off a mirror in the, er, dressing room. No, wait ... It's positioned on the stage above the curtains. OK. Cool, so that's reflected onto a thin sheet of baking paper which is then filmed upside down ... when you see it, it looks like we're back-to-front. Hang on. Look. Go ask the people at Passion. I'm sure they've some kind boffin manual they can refer you to. No, wait, I tell you what. I'll draw you a picture of how it works. This'll explain everything.

Brilliant. It's all perfectly clear now.

Murdoc: So, anyway, the audience had barely managed to scrape their own jaws off the floor before it was time for the big category, the one everyone had been waiting for: Best Group. Although, let's be honest, after a show like that, there was very little point in going through the pantomime of opening the golden envelope. Everyone knew we'd won. Gorillaz are the best band in the world. Fact. Who else were they going to give it to? U2? Don't make me laugh. Our performance was sick. Those other bands just look stone-age compared to what we do. Gorillaz have, quite kindly, shown everyone the future ...

On hand to accept the award on behalf of the band – who were already screaming down Lisbon's backstreets with a police escort in order to make the flight back to Manchester – were video directors Jamie Hewlett and Pete Candeland, plus Dave and Posdnuos from De La Soul.

Murdoc: Bit of a cheek of Jamie picking up our 'Best Group Award', actually. All he does is doodle on our covers.

Hewlett, ever the troublemaker, mumbled something enigmatic about 'Gorillaz. Best group – and we don't even exist.'

Murdoc: I exist, Hewlett, I just wasn't hanging out with *you* that night. Having played a globally-satellited gig, I wasn't really in the right mood to hang out with an ageing, scraggily-bearded cartoonist. No offence, mind. Shaggy.

2D: I thought it was a good speech. I think it was supposed to be Existencil . . . Existentious . . . French.

De La Soul were more generous in their speech, with Posdnuos offering a heart-felt tribute to their collaborators as he collected the trophy: *'It's great to have a group that thinks outside of the box and is willing to push the limits and not allow rules to set standards on how they should make music.'*

Murdoc: Pos is right. It's been my ability to think out of my box that really has pushed this whole Gorillaz parade forward. But despite his kind words, he does still owe me five pounds and I'm not going to let him off it.

Russel: We were delighted that De La Soul could join us in Lisbon and we suggested they pick up the award – they're so eloquent, it just seemed to make sense. We're not really into the whole 'award' thing, but we did love performing that night. We attempted to perform in a way we had never tried before, and I think it worked to a massive extent. We just tried appearing . . . different to any other band. The visual enormity of the show just adds so much more colour to the music. We feel this type of presentation just really enhances the appreciation of the music; it grabs your attention and makes you listen.

Back in the UK, Gorillaz were all over the media; reviews and news from Manchester and Lisbon filled the papers for days.

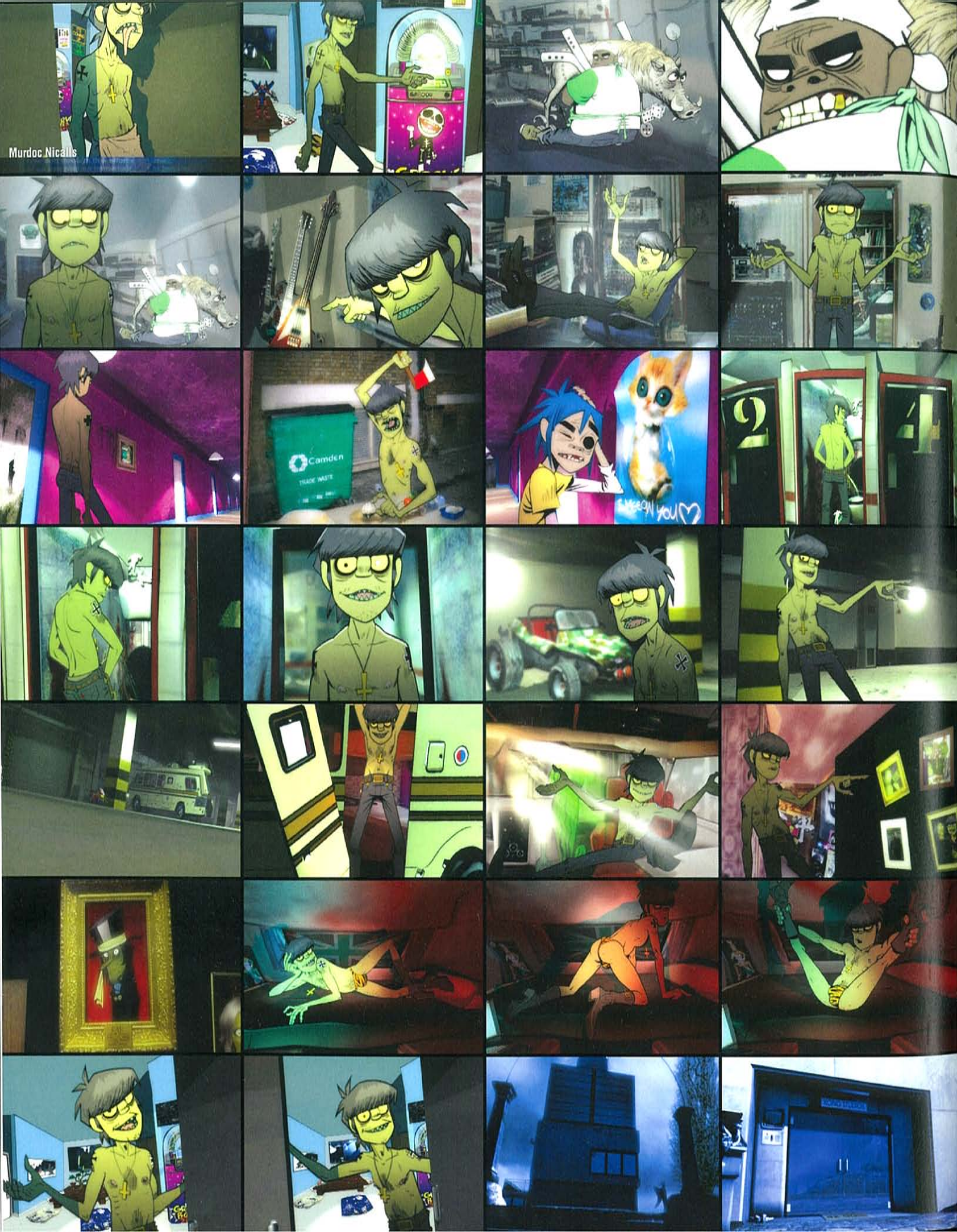
These two events, massive successes in their own right, were all the more astounding when you realise they had been pulled off simultaneously. But not everyone was behind them. Lantern-jawed rapper 50 Cent was incensed that Gorillaz were represented at the EMA awards, telling an interviewer at some length that they shouldn't have been nominated because 'they aren't a normally functioning band'.

Murdoc: Not a normally functioning band? What's that? Of course we're not a 'normally functioning band'!! That'd probably go some way to explaining why I've had to hire a lock-up in Brentford to store the MASSIVE amount of awards my band has won. But you know, if he wants a piece of the virtual action why doesn't he just bring out a game where he's walking around in a simplified, gun-toting, clichéd shoot 'em up, and try hawking those goods. He has? What a surprise.

After the excitement of the EMA event, Gorillaz were back in the royal box to enjoy the last nights of the Manchester spectaculars, which would play out until November 5th.

After the quite large success of the Manchester Shows coupled with the EMAs, the band returned to Kong Studios to celebrate. The extended knees-up lead to Murdoc's forgetting a commitment made some time ago that he'd promised to honour.

Chart-topping virtual band Gorillaz were the latest in a long line of big-name 'A-list' music artists to welcome the MTV cameras into their home for a personally guided tour. The vast sprawl of the Kong mansion was the perfect subject for the seven-minute extravaganza that was the Gorillaz Cribs.


Murdoc Nicalls
Camden
TRADE WASTE
2

Gorillaz MTV Cribs

Murdoc: So this is a strange thing. MTV wanted to film us at Kong for an episode of Cribs. But I was in such a state I ended up having to have a script written for me, because I'd been out for about three nights before and couldn't remember anything about where I lived.

2D: You're putting it on now.

Murdoc: Have you ever drunk Grappa? 'The dirty grape'? Knocks you right out and cleans your drains at the same time. Seriously.

Russel: So someone had to actually write a script to show you round your own home?

Murdoc: Yeah, but it still went straight in at Number One as being the best MTV Cribs of all time. So you know, who's the dick?

When the MTV cameras arrived, Murdoc, fresh out the shower, greeted them wrapped only in a small, shabby hand towel. The Gorillaz MTV Cribs edition unfolds in a hailstorm of rudeness, ridiculing everything within range, including the show itself. While taking the crew round Kong, Murdoc takes it upon himself to deride every other pop stars' shit-shack that the show had ever filmed.

Urinating on his own MTV award positioned carefully in the Kong studios toilet, our host disparages all the other celebrities who have been the subject of Cribs: *'I've seen quite a few episodes of MTV Cribs and every house is the same. The first thing these peasants do when they get any money is buy some tacky show home and fill it up with shit. They call this culture? They wouldn't know what a culture was if it jumped up and bit them ... Peasants ... Scumbags'*

Murdoc then proceeds to downgrade anyone else who comes to mind, including his own bandmates.

Murdoc: It's gone beyond a joke, now. I can say anything I want and people just clap. I'm pissing on my own award and the show's voted the best of all-time. What can I do? Having said that, I feel I'm totally right. All that show does is drag some turgid pop star round their useless dump, that they've probably borrowed, while they attempt to display their pathetic possessions and make out like they're the Sultan of Brunei. 'Yeah man. You're getting real paid.' It's vulgar, and the people are soulless vacuums. 'You've got a fridge? Wicked!'

Murdoc guides the petrified crew round the gateway to Hell, the Kong Studios recording room, the private cinema, his bandmates' bedrooms, the graveyard and landfill sites and the legendary Kong Studios carpark, where he keeps his collection of crashed cars. *'My Ferrari Enzo is just a cube of damaged metal now. I had a little knock.'*

During the amazing tour we get to see a close-up shot of Murdoc cutting an onion, and Murdoc zooming around like a spoilt three-year-old in his giant Kong playpen. Fascinating.

Finally we're herded into the mucky inner sanctum of his squalid Winnebago. Murdoc proudly poses for the MTV cameras in a leopard-skin thong, which shows off his spotty backside. He then attempts – unsuccessfully – to seduce one of the camera operators, before booting the whole hapless film crew out of the mansion.

Murdoc: Well, there's only so much you can take, really, isn't there? I don't know what they were doing there in the first place and I don't really care. It's just more promotion for us, and a fantastic insight into how a real, genuine rockstar lives ...

Well. At least it's different. But that's not even the end of it.

Murdoc gives 'The Queen's Speech'

Unbelievably, Murdoc Niccals, Britain's most illegible bachelor, was invited by 3 Mobile to deliver his own version of the Queen's Speech, that venerable British institution in which our monarch gets ten minutes to speak her brain to the entire nation on Christmas Day. What jumped-up, ego-sodden popstar, enamoured with the sound of his own voice and the smell of his own breath could refuse?

Murdoc: Great! I'll just grab my ermine. I couldn't give a stuff about Christmas, as I'm not a Christian, and the rest of my life is a huge celebratory blowout of gargantuan excess anyhow, but any opportunity to blow my own trumpet and spout my big opinions loudly to others, is one I'll surely grab. And I don't really see how at this stage of the game anything that 'The Queen' imparts is going to relate to anyone other than other members of the Royal Family, so it's much more important to get an alternative view from someone like myself. Having said that, cartoon alcoholic global megastars probably shouldn't really be taken too seriously either.

At the time I didn't actually realise that this was going out to so many people. I just jotted down a couple of insults in the back of the cab on the way to the shoot. I had a flick through the papers and just kind of made a bit of a comment on how we were all going down the pan. I stuck one in there about my old whipping boy James Blunt which the papers loved. So that was good.

Murdoc's assessment of the year covered 'Toxic vapour clouds, earthquakes, face transplants, floods in Glastonbury and the end of the old routemaster buses'. But as he went on to state, 'It wasn't all good news. What with new music from James Blunt (who needs valium?), and Westlife, and more films from Harry Potter, it really did look like we're one step closer to the Apocalypse.'

Festive fun, eh, readers?

Murdoc: I wouldn't take it too seriously. You'd be surprised how little I care about any of that kind of garbage.

So sticking in a quick mention that 'what with the great advances in technology, this time next year you could watch more crap on your mobile', Murdoc gave a last Xmas plug for his own album and a quick 'Hail Satan', before his speech was transmitted right around the country. And by a unique process of figure-juggling, the broadcast apparently went out to an audience of over 101 million, about 40 million more than the country contains.

Murdoc: That's my kind of maths! So there you have it. Gorillaz: 'bigger than royalty'. A fantastic way to end what had been one of the oddest and most successful years of my life. And I was still only 39. Great!

December 25th 2005 *Gorillaz' version of Queen's Speech broadcast on 3 Mobile*

December 26th 2005 *Gorillaz' edition of MTV Cribs airs*

Back at Kong, there was just enough time left before the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve for a moment's stock-taking: the end of year critic's polls. If the response to 'Demon Days' on release had been effulgent, the reappraisal of the album as 2005 drew to a close was approaching the embarrassing. Gorillaz were praised at length for their superlative work and contributions to music. A curious assortment of publications scrambled to outdo each other in the purple-ness of their prose. 'Demon Days' was placed in pole position in critic's lists in titles from GQ to Zoo, from The Sun to The Telegraph, who were touchingly enthusiastic about the album: *'Colourful and visionary, Gorillaz have created a template for music that combines ideas, emotion and sheer entertainment.'*

The distance of six months since album release, and the subsequent aura of creative excitement that had surrounded the band – the awe-inspiring videos, the Manchester shows, the EMA performances, the three all-conquering singles – had given 'Demon Days' the opportunity to capture the imagination of audiences and critics everywhere.

Russel: We knew it was good, but to see the reactions from the fans and from the critics . . . We were blown away.

Murdoc: You like us! You really like us! WHATEVER. I'm so very glad the journalists of the UK have caught up with me. I knew we'd made a killer album, I didn't need anyone else to tell me that. Although having said that, those round-up thingies were useful to send to my 'parole officer' in La Mesa. And I had a few framed to send to the ladies at The Chicken Choker. And then I blew some up really big and papered the wall outside the Happy Shopper in Stoke just to properly rub Tony Chopper's nose in it. So they served some kind of purpose, I suppose.

Noodle: What was most pleasing was the way in which the journalists had picked up on the themes and emotions that had informed the record. We had made this album with love and care and it was gratifying to see that others responded with the same level of attention.

2D: I still haven't got a copy of it myself, funnily enough. Maybe I'll get one for Christmas.

The praise was similarly positive over in the States, where Spin voted 'Feel Good Inc.' Single of the Year, placing 'Demon Days' at number four in their end of year album list. TIME Magazine was moved to declare *'magically, it all comes together in your head and forms something like a unified theory of modern music'*. It also made the top twenty Best Albums of the Year according to Rolling Stone, and last, but not least, the album was voted Best Electronic Album by the readers of Playboy Magazine.

Murdoc: Best Electronic Album? What's that mean? All albums are electronic, even the ones by that Amish band The White Stripes. They've got to plug their hi-fi in somewhere, surely. But Playboy Magazine, eh? That's great news, very uplifting! Maybe Hugh's forgiven me for the whole ashtray incident. I'll give him a call . . .

And that, for Gorillaz, was the end of 2005. Thank God.

TOKYO
STORM
WARNING
BR

Chapter 12
The Light at the End of the Tunnel

'I saw that day
Lost my mind
Lord I'm fine
Maybe in time
You'll want to be mine'

Grab-A-Grammy

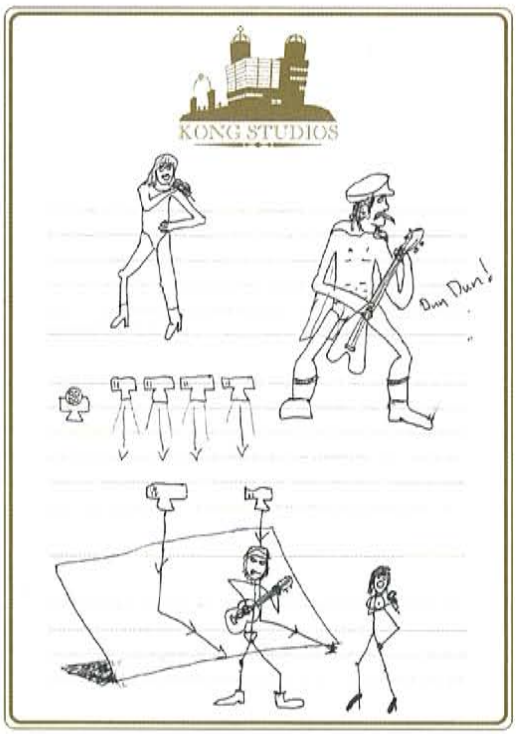
Gorillaz had ended 2005 with a bang. With the cheers from Lisbon and Manchester still ringing in their ears and Album of the Year clippings neatly filed away in scrapbooks at Kong, the band opened 2006 with a month's rehearsals for one of the biggest shows of their career so far: The Grammys. The annual industry knees-up was the highlight of the US music calendar, which tells you how much they know about throwing a party. When the nominations were announced in December, Gorillaz had surprised everyone except themselves with a staggering four nominations – five if you count Danger Mouse's nod for Best Producer.

Murdoc: So, right, the next thing that happens is I get a call from Madonna. The line was a bit crackly but I could just make out that she wanted to play with us. At the Grammy's. In LA . . . Which could have been taken a number of ways but considering we were up for four or five of the things, I could only assume that she was talking about appearing onstage with us . . .

Not only were Gorillaz and Madonna booked to play at the Grammys, they were asked to kick off proceedings with the opening slot of the TV show, beamed out to an estimated million billion viewers worldwide. With a limited amount of rehearsal time available, the band elected to perform 'Feel Good Inc.' again. The track had been Gorillaz' biggest hit in the States and the stage sets and rigs were already built and ready. There was a certain amount of debate about how to bring Madonna in to a performance that was already pretty near perfect. After some very late night chats between the two camps over the Kong webcam it was decided that the beginning of Madonna's hi-NRG hit 'Hung Up' would be mixed in to the last section of 'Feel Good Inc.'

Murdoc: So 'Feel Good' meets 'Hung Up'. The 'Feel Up' Mix. A real clash of the Titans . . . but I think she only agreed to do it because I was . . . er . . . . 'Hung Good'.

The Pepper's Ghost technique had worked brilliantly for them in Lisbon, but no one was quite sure how it would work with a megastar like Madonna. Would her very aura of success be just too much for the projectors to cope with . . . ? Lisbon had opened minds around the world and proved what Gorillaz were capable of, but it meant that their next performance had to be even better. Again, the technical team worked round the clock to produce what had



ABOVE
Gorillaz on stage at the Grammys with Madonna, as drawn by Murdoc
'It was similar to the EMA's performance but this time featured Madonna'
MURDOC NICCALS

to be another jaw-dropping, water-cooler TV moment AND a fantastic live show for the audience in LA.

While in Essex the band were starting on their post-Christmas diet and fitness regimes, in London the attention was on the serious bits of kit needed to meld Madonna, Gorillaz and De La Soul into one seamless, coherent whole ...

Cara Speller, Gorillaz' producer for the visual side of things, takes up the story:

Cara Speller: We knew we wanted to do a combined performance but there was a lot of debate about how best to combine Madonna with Gorillaz onstage. In the end, we decided that the best way to really make it seem as if they were performing together, and aware of each other's space on the stage, was to have Madonna appearing on the screen rather than live on the stage.

It turned out that the technology really wasn't available for what we wanted to do, to film her, so we ended up working very closely with Arri, the camera manufacturers. They built a camera for us that could shoot in high-definition at 60 frames per second, and give us enough information to be able to grade her to look like the band and to keep the movement as realistic as possible. And, you know, yet again it was one of those things that was really nerve-wracking because even by the morning of the shoot – we were getting ready and we had Madonna turning up in four hours – but the tests on the new camera hadn't successfully run for more than 20 minutes without failing, overheating. So we didn't know whether it was going to work – they ended up bringing two cameras down so they could swap one in if the overheating problem happened again.

And in fact we also shot it on film, so it was an incredibly expensive case of having back up: we had two camera heads on one tripod and shot everything on film and on the new, digital camera.

The results were once again worth the trials and tribulations that the Gorillaz team had had to endure.

Cara Speller: It worked brilliantly, they were fantastic. We spent a lot of time compositing it together and making sure it looked perfect, but for me, the best moment was when we were in rehearsals at the Staples Centre for the Grammys the day before the show. It was the middle of the day and they started playing the footage, so Madonna came up on our stage and started walking across, and someone paused the playback and Madonna just froze halfway. Everyone around us, their jaws just hit the floor. They actually thought that she was on the stage.

Obviously, despite his total lack of technical knowledge, Murdoc still feels compelled to explain how this Grammy's performance worked further.

Murdoc: Look, let me handle this. I've already explained this once for that whole thing at the EMA's. But just for your benefit I'll draw you another

good picture. Concentrate this time, because this is probably going to be the best one I've ever done. I can't believe I have to do this again . . . (scritch) . . . (scratch) . . . (scritch) . . . hmm . . . mmm . . . just add a little bit of hair there . . . (scritch) . . . that's a good bit . . . mmm . . . Great! Finished! There you go. That's me on stage with Madonna. At the Grammys!

February 7th 2006 *Gorillaz arrive at Los Angeles*

While the techies were propping up their eyelids with matchsticks to make it through the rehearsals, the band were just arriving in LA. 'Demon Days' guest star Dennis Hopper organized a pre-Grammy party the night before the awards to welcome Gorillaz to the City of Angels.

Russel: Now that was really something. Getting off the plane, then getting a cab straight over to Dennis Hopper's house. Man, that guy has got a fantastic art collection. Just beautiful. And for him to throw a party for us was far out. Then, of course, Murdoc had to go and knock a beer over on someone's bed and I nearly had to break his nose for the ninth time . . .

Murdoc: It was very generous of Dennis to allow me and my scumbag mates into his house. He's got a really good attitude, and he always has done. I found a note taped on to Dennis's kitchen cabinet, which I though was a great motto:

'Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, Champagne in one hand – strawberries in the other, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming WOO HOO – What a Ride!'

Murdoc: It pretty well sums up how I approach my whole existence. And I tell you what, Dennis is certainly a man who practices what he preaches. The party was good too; he laid on food, DJs, invited some of his freaky mates round. It was a funny night. I got talking to some actor from Jacob's Creek. Some muppet jumped in the pool. We stayed until five in the morning before I decided to kick myself out. It was a big day for me the next day so I had to go polish my belt buckle. That nappy's not going to keep itself up.

February 8th 2006 *Gorillaz, Madonna and De La Soul open the 48th Grammy Awards*

No awards ceremony is longer than the Grammys. Sensibly, the TV show is a pretty ruthless edit of what is actually an entire day of prize-giving. That means that the winner of the Best Polka Album category doesn't get his moment in the sun, but it's a sacrifice that has to be made. The band pitched up on time with friend and supporter Dennis Hopper, stopping for red carpet snaps with him on the way in.

2D: Someone from some stupid Hollywood fashion show started having a go at me, saying my face looked too eighties, and that Murdoc had a paunch and that we both looked really knackered and nobody knew who we were anyway. Thanks a bunch, nice reception.

Murdoc: Yup. 'Hoo-ray for Hollywood.'

BELOW

Dennis Hopper's Party, Los Angeles

After a bum-numbing four hours in stifling heat watching awards being doled out, it was time. Gorillaz took to the stage with De La Soul for another eyeball-searing performance. When the first bars of 'Hung Up' wound round the chiming chords of 'Feel Good Inc.' and 'Madonna' shimmied across the set, the crowd went wild. The rules of live performance were torn up, set on fire, stamped on and ground to dust under the heel of Murdoc's well-worn boot.

Murdoc: I'm a firm believer that if you're gonna try something new for the first time, it's probably best to have most of the world watching you. Just to give the occasion a little . . . er . . . extra fire, y'know? Keeps you on your toes. And it really throws down the gauntlet to other acts, doesn't it? I mean, Madonna, the 'Queen of Pop', gyrating with me, Murdoc Niccals, 'King of the Underworld'. Fantastic! Just imagine what our kids would look like.

2D: I'm not being big headed or nuffink', but I tell you what, it's nice to know you're like the biggest and best fing on the planet. In front of all those other people that fink they're the best, but they're actually not any good. But the Gorillaz' performance was like being Stanley Kubrick when he showed '2001' and everyone else is still watching 'The Jetsons'.

Murdoc: The Grammy's gig was a shocker, wasn't it? I tell you, I don't scare easily but Madonna gave me a real jump when I saw her suddenly appear like that. I was miles away.

There were at least a dozen performances after that, including a resoundingly peculiar appearance from legendary recluse and musical maverick Sly Stone, but for Gorillaz the after-party began the minute they stepped off stage. With one awesome performance under their belt and in receipt of their first Grammy – Best Pop Collaboration with vocals for 'Feel Good Inc.' – the band hit hospitality in a big way.

Murdoc: Urrrp!! I was a bit disappointed by their choice of mixer – all they seemed to have was these giant cans of Dr Pepper. And I'm not drinking that unless there's a lot of Watney's Red Barrel to go with it. Actually, the Grammys is a celebrity cattle show. I had to go and sit in the carpark 'cos they won't let you smoke inside. Still, at least I had a decent excuse to miss all of that cowboy nonsense that came on after us.

Russel: Murdoc was as badly behaved as usual, but even so the security were pretty heavy with us. People were getting itchy every time we moved. It was all very weird . . .

Murdoc: Just as I was on my way out I saw the wizard from the Black-Eyed Peas walking in, which probably means they were gonna perform. So I think I timed my exit quite well. I must say about Madonna, though, it really was an honour and a privilege to work with someone who has been so creative and consistently successful within the music industry. Er . . . she should be very grateful.

The fun continued afterwards at Madonna's LA pad. The party was a riot of b-boys, dance offs and champagne, but even in that happy atmosphere Murdoc attracted bad vibes . . .

Murdoc: The party round at Madonna's was lots of fun, but I got into a pointless argument with one of the ex-members of that cartoon group The Archies. Jughead, or something. Man, that guy's so bitter. He was really drunk, his hair was all over the place, he kept shoving me and saying how Gorillaz had ripped him off. So we left. It was either that or I was going to have to stove his face in. Anyhow, we had to catch a flight the next morning. I think we had another gig or thing to play. Fuck Jughead.

So the next morning, somewhat the worse for wear, the band boarded a plane for Heathrow. It could have been

the effects of a Dr Pepper overdose, or a relapse into the shadow of mental instability, but Russel was again convinced that the plane was being followed.

Russel: Every time I looked out the plane window I could see helicopters tailing the plane again. Something was up. It didn't look good . . .

Gorillaz landed in the UK to a heap of Grammy press heralding the arrival of a new kind of musical performance and one or two stories about some Irish band and their vulgar haul of five Grammys. But despite their success in LA they couldn't escape an obscure feeling that heavy clouds were gathering once more . . .

February 13th 2006 *Gorillaz announce Demon Days Live Shows at the Apollo, NYC*

Just to keep things nice and mental it was decided amidst the plate-spinning antics of The Grammys, the Brits, a couple of holographic bar mitzvahs and online cabaret performance featuring 2,000 digital bears, that now might be a good time to ask Damon and his mates to do another one of those things that they did in Manchester. This time over at Harlem's legendary Apollo venue.

Murdoc: Yup! Why not? It was a great show, featuring some great songs and a huge load of all-star guests. All I have to do is sit in a box and throw popcorn. So I can't see the problem. But what's this about the Brits?

Sorry, didn't I mention it? You're due live on stage at Earl's Court next page, for the Brits 2006.

Murdoc: No one tells me anything round here. Cheers, chum. Which song are we doing?

'Dirty Harry'.

Murdoc: With all those bloody kids? Great. I'm turning in to some kind of children's presenter now. (sighs) Right then, let's get this over with . . .

Brit Awards 2006

February 15th 2006 *Gorillaz perform at the Brit Awards*

To mark their measly two Brit nominations, Gorillaz generously agreed to perform another synapse-twisting live show, hand-tailored to suit the spectators at Earl's Court and the viewers at home.

As a nod to their legendary Brits performance in 2002, the band decided to break out the LED screens and kick it old school Gorillaz style. Passion Pictures were once again behind the show's super-slick visuals.

2D: *Behind* the show? I thought we were on top of the screens that night? This live performance thing is really starting to confuse me . . .

Bootie Brown flew in from the States to reprise his role as the soulful soldier, and a massed choir of darling little children was raked in from around the country. Some were from the Manchester schools that had supplied the kids for Demon Days Live, some were from local schools, and some Russel 'enlisted' after catching them playing 'knock down ginger' on the studio door at Kong.

Murdoc: So after those great reviews for the Gorillaz 'Demon Days' tribute band over in Manchester, I thought what I'd do is kinda nick their idea of having real kids, you know, 'cos people seem to love all that kind of stuff, but then combine it with the big bad techno parts that form the other killer element of Gorillaz live. That way, what you'd have is all the very best of all sides of Gorillaz. It'd be a techno version of Manchester.

Backstage was a riot: kids and cartoons mingled with a troupe of fifty gorgeous girls gilded for fellow Brit nominee Kanye West's performance of 'Goldigger'.

Murdoc: Show off.

Gorillaz' long, long, long suffering tour manager Colonel Duffy was lured back with promises of Turkish Delight and emeralds, and a year's worth of free milinery, and took great delight in his responsibilities as chief child catcher. He had a special whistle that only the under-12's could hear, which proved very useful until Murdoc fiddled with the frequency in order to entice Kanye West's dancers back to the carpark and his Winnebago.

Murdoc: Just call me 'Goldfinger'.

In the event, Gorillaz won neither of their awards, keeping their duck for the Brits. The newspaper headlines were all about '90s throwbacks the Kaiser Chiefs, who got three.

Murdoc: Still less than Albarn's original lot back in 1996. I read once that sequels to movies, the number 2s, usually only take 65% of the original. Diminishing returns, eh? I'm not being funny, but what is it with Gorillaz and their Brit Award deflecting skills? We whip out an album like 'Demon Days', make a bigger splash across the pond than any other export in years, create an industry that'll guarantee that half the country is employed for the next fifty years, and they still can't give us one of

their stupid molten metal doorstoppers. I just don't get it. Where as Blunt, Dido in a skirt, patently high on voice-changing helium, won a couple of the poncey paperweights. Someone's mucking about backstage, surely?

The Gorillaz performance was an undeniable highlight, with the band marching 80ft high across the Earl's Court stage, accompanied by 100 kids. What's not to like? But, ever the artist, Murdoc refused to dwell on the matter and busied himself with the next task in hand; collaborating with Jamie Hewlett and record company supremo Jimmy Manson, who was over for the award show. Their deep discussions involved the idea for the next video, a grand spectacular for the 'Demon Days' inner soul song, 'El Mañana'. And what Murdoc had in mind was really, really adventurous ...

The Set Up

Unknown to the other Gorillaz, since the whole of the Demon Detour mess Murdoc had been having pretty intensive meetings with none other than Jimmy Manson, now head of the Gorillaz music label Stateside. Since their last meeting Jimmy Manson had worked his wicked way further up the industry ladder, and now, as the newly-promoted head of the record label, contented himself with throwing his malicious and embittered weight around as frequently as possible.

Murdoc: I can understand that. He worked hard for that position and was now just enjoying the fruits of his labour. Anyhow, you may be wondering exactly how I managed to sort out the whole assassination attempt business over in the States, huh? Well, I'd drawn up a list of names. We all had. I went over to see Jimmy over at the record company to get to the bottom of this rubbish.

Murdoc already had a pretty good clue as to the true identity of his number one suspect, information discovered via his two Mexican compadres.

Murdoc: It was the Mexicans who let me in on this. See, way, way back around 1999 they'd shared a cell with wee Jimmy Manson. This was when he was just a small-time crook busted for vagrancy and petty car crime. It wasn't until they saw Jimmy on the Demon Detour that they put two and two together. They tipped me off that something was going on. See, Jimmy's always been a wrong 'un. Incredibly bitter about his inability to make it as a musician. He'd tried out, auditioned, for loads of bands but never made any of them. Then he tried writing songs on his own and that was a waste of time. Then he got banged up, so while he's stewing in jail, he's working on the blueprint of this revenge plan to knock off bands. He never really could keep his trap shut, so he mouthed off his mental scheme to the Mexicans. They didn't really take any notice. Well, not until they spotted him on the tour with us. I've got to take my hat off to Jimmy, though. He didn't stop trying. He never gave up ...

See, that clever, evil sod Jimmy Manson had devised a plan to kill off Gorillaz, one of the best selling bands on his own label! His motive was two-fold.

They way he saw it, Gorillaz had peaked. They threatened not to make another album after 'Demon Days', and anyhow, they're such an expensive act to run, if we kill 'em off now (his psychotic train of thought ran), we've sealed their place in rock history forever. They've sold millions upon millions of records, won every award: there's nowhere left for them to go, right? Let's make 'em go out on a high. That way, like all

great icons before them, from James Dean to Monroe, Lennon, Hendrix, Morrison, Tupac, Biggie ... Gorillaz' place would become frozen, captured for all time in the untouchable landscape of pop history. The press this'd generate would guarantee unlimited extra album sales with no further expense to the label. There'd be no troublesome band to work with, no artistic strops; Jimmy could shove out b-side albums, remixes, re-issues and cash-ins till the cows came home. 'They'll be bigger than ever!'

And his second reason? Well, he'd do anything to wipe the smile off Murdoc's smug face for good. He'd get his own back on Gorillaz and that arrogant fool Murdoc. 'If I can't be his mate, then no one can,' Manson whispered into his pillow every night.

Murdoc: He had a long list of bands, big-headed superstars, who he thought would be better off, more successful even, dead. Gorillaz were the first. He said he'd picked on Gorillaz first because I'd turned him away from an audition years ago, the one that actually got Noodle the job. He'd held this grudge all the way back to the USA. He'd tried to be good to us, he said, but then what with that business at the house in Hollywood he'd made his mind up. Gorillaz were going to die.

However, Murdoc could see how Jimmy's tiny, twisted, insane mind worked and came up with a deal that he knew Jimmy couldn't refuse ...

Murdoc: I told him it was a great idea! That he was a genius, and that I could help set it up. It didn't need to be the whole group, just enough to finish the band off. I could make this happen and make it look like an accident. I told him that if we set it up, together, as part of the last video, we could make it look like an on-screen disaster, a tragic accident. Boo hoo! Then we're in the clear. Gorillaz really would be over. And with the onslaught of press that would result, I'd launch my solo career, take all the glory, and restart this gig how it should have been all along: with me as the frontman. To seal the deal I offered Jimmy the greatest golden carrot of them all, the one thing that I knew he wouldn't refuse ... He could be in the new band. I would be the black metal George Michael, and he could be my Andrew Ridgeley.

Sexy. So a dastardly plan was hatched between them ...

Murdoc: I said to him, 'first of all you gotta sort all these other chancers out. Klinker, Cracker, Skinbacio, Wurzel, Grassy Noel, Doppelgangerz, that blonde banshee, Hamburgler ... I want all this lot to just quit it, disappear. Pay 'em off, shut them up, whatever. This is our thing. Just the two of us. I can't let any of these other sods start messing it up for us'. I said, 'let's make this thing nice and clean, Jim, old mate. Then we can get down to the proper business.' He saw the sense in it. We both did.

And Wee Jimmy Manson, frothing at the mouth just thinking about his forthcoming future as a real rock 'n' roller, had kept his part of the bargain. He'd tidied up all the loose ends and promised to keep schtum until they'd sorted out the finer details of their devilish plan.

Now it was time to put Murdoc's evil scheme into full effect ...

El Mañana, El Extremo

The fourth and final release from 'Demon Days'. Gorillaz were going go out with a bang with this one; but no one could anticipate the impact this video would make.

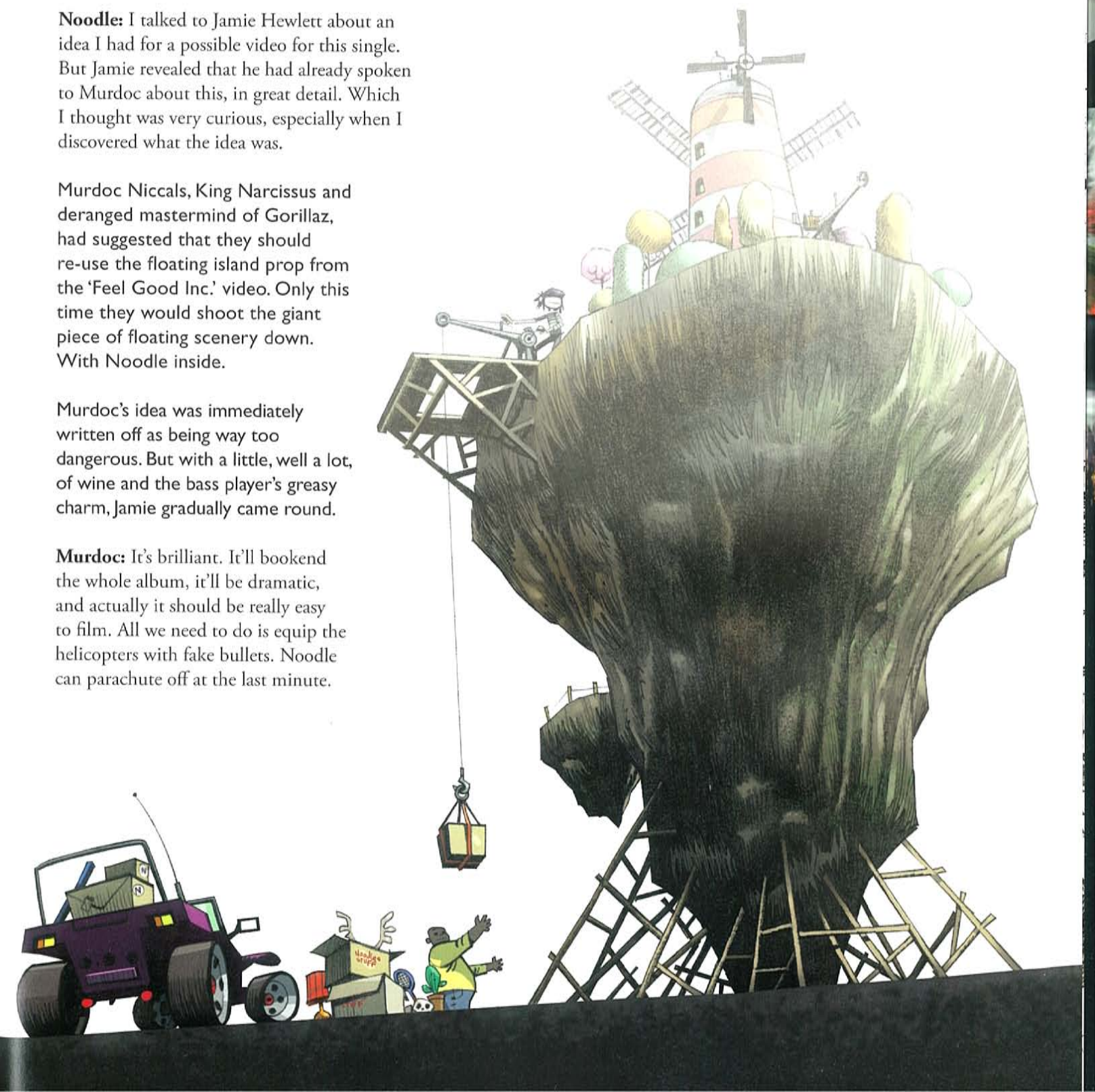
This was a big video. Gorillaz had always intended that the last video should really capture what the band felt was the overall tone of the 'Demon Days', but this was different. With Murdoc pulling his underhanded moves left, right and centre, this production was now in a state close to anarchy. Fasten your seat belt, kids, it's going be a bumpy ride ...

Noodle: I talked to Jamie Hewlett about an idea I had for a possible video for this single. But Jamie revealed that he had already spoken to Murdoc about this, in great detail. Which I thought was very curious, especially when I discovered what the idea was.

Murdoc Niccals, King Narcissus and deranged mastermind of Gorillaz, had suggested that they should re-use the floating island prop from the 'Feel Good Inc.' video. Only this time they would shoot the giant piece of floating scenery down. With Noodle inside.

Murdoc's idea was immediately written off as being way too dangerous. But with a little, well a lot, of wine and the bass player's greasy charm, Jamie gradually came round.

Murdoc: It's brilliant. It'll bookend the whole album, it'll be dramatic, and actually it should be really easy to film. All we need to do is equip the helicopters with fake bullets. Noodle can parachute off at the last minute.



Then we bring the thing down. Blow it up! Yeah? It'll look great! We get to re-use the awesome floating island, it'll tie in with the 'Feel Good' video and everyone'll wonder what happened. It's an incredible idea.

The rest of Gorillaz were really unsure, especially with Murdoc's erratic behaviour and increasingly opaque motivation, but with Hewlett enthusiastic and totally convinced the exploding island scenario could work, they finally and reluctantly relented, even Noodle. Surely, Jamie would know what he was doing.

2D: What is Murdoc up to . . . ?!?

Russel: We had our doubts, but we'd come so far together. Jamie had always delivered, even when we'd been unsure of what exactly was going on in his head.

The floating island was taken out of storage, patched up and re-inflated.

March 7th 2006 *Gorillaz shoot video for fourth and final single from 'Demon Days', 'El Mañana'*

On-set tensions were running at an all-time high. Every Gorilla, other than Murdoc, was incredibly nervous about this shoot, and the very real possibility of endangering the life of young Noodle. Jamie though seemed calm and possibly even blasé about the risks that the shoot would entail. The artistic goal was the main priority, and the idea for the short film would create a dramatic and truly resonant ending to this phase of Gorillaz.

Returning to the theme that had kick-started the second phase of Gorillaz' career would underscore their original message. The floating island represented an idea of mental freedom, somewhere in our minds we could go if we weren't held back by the fear we have instilled in us by the constant and unrelenting bleakness of events in our world. This symbol of escape, of liberty, would be hunted down and shot to pieces by the unidentified dark black helicopter hawks, and Noodle along with it. Her purity, her light and her positive intentions, would all be to no avail. The light would be extinguished.

Capturing this incredible event would require great bravery from Noodle. The island would have to be gunned down with Noodle remaining onboard as the burning ship went down. Strategically placed explosives would be planted to ensure that the destruction of the ship was controlled. This was a one-take opportunity. If for some reason the footage wasn't captured or something went wrong, there was no possibility of rebuilding the giant floating prop. Stakes were higher than, well, an island in the sky.

Noodle was given a specifically manufactured parachute that would be hidden beneath her striped jumper, only to be used at the very last minute before the flaming island was smashed to pieces on the jagged rocks of the location's deep valley.

This almost unbelievable stunt required an incredible sense of timing. But Noodle's in Gorillaz, right? Great timing's her bread and butter. This mammoth shoot, larger and more ambitious than all previous Gorillaz efforts, was under a lack of administrative control from the beginning. No one even noticed that the twin helicopters that appeared on set weren't the same as those used in the 'Feel Good Inc.' video.

'It is theorized that the events of the video are not merely staged because the helicopters change in appearance. In "Feel Good Inc." they are lighter, and seem to more closely resemble Bell 47Gs. In "El Mañana" they appear heavier and more amoured, seemingly modeled more like the Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopter. This would seem to indicate that Noodle was pursued in the "Feel Good Inc." video, stayed at Kong Studios, packed up, departed, and was then pursued by two *different* helicopters in the "El Mañana" video.' – *From Wikipedia; online encyclopaedia*

Murdoc: Er . . . yeah. That sounds about right.

As the shoot began, everything appeared to be going to plan. The takes looked perfect . . .

The video opens with a tight close up of a green eye – as the camera pulls back it becomes clear that it's Noodle. She is on the floating island from the 'Feel Good Inc.' video, alone in bright sunshine with the windmill in the background. The island is peaceful, butterflies darting about, green grass blowing in the breeze, wild flowers growing here and there.

As she walks to the edge of the island, high above her we see two black shapes. They are quickly revealed to be helicopters. They draw near, circling, and open fire, shattering the calm of the island. Noodle, terrified, runs for the shelter of the windmill. The helicopters retreat, but as she ventures out of her hiding place they return, blasting the island and the windmill with a hail of bullets.

So far so good.

Murdoc: That's it, Noodle! It's all looking good.

Murdoc looked on, his stare positively manic. He's never showed so much interest in a video shoot before. He's never showed so much interest in *anything* before.

Murdoc: So I said to Jimmy, for the 'El Mañana' shoot, what we'll do is I'll hide you on the island. You camp out in the windmill tower the night before. Stay well hidden. It's imperative! If anyone spots you the whole thing's up. When the video starts the helicopters are gonna appear behind the island. They'll approach the island, then they're gonna try to shoot Noodle down, but it's just fake bullets. It's all in the script. You stay hidden in the windmill. I'll stash a couple of guns inside the tower with you, right? Stay hidden until the bullets start. When the fake bullets come out of the helicopter, you grab the guns and you shoot Noodle. The sound of the 'copters and the gunfire will cover you completely. It'll look like a horrific filming accident, a terrible tragedy! As the thing's burning, you leap off round the back. The smoke from the flames, the angle of the island, the chaos, they'll all hide you totally. You'll be covered. I'll make sure of that.

Jimmy was only too keen to be a major player in Murdoc's convoluted and malicious new schemes. These two brothers were on their way together.

Murdoc: But remember, don't come out of your hiding place until the first bullets start flying.

Back on the set, Noodle flees back to the windmill but the sails are ablaze and the island is losing height. Frantically, she runs up the stairs; the trees are burning and the windmill is filled with dust and smoke.

Is this right? Should this be happening? Noodle looks terrified, but it's impossible to tell whether she's acting or not. The bullets are ripping the island to pieces. It's going down!

The burning island begins a speedy and sickening descent into a ravine, pursued by the helicopter gunships. We see Noodle at the door of the windmill, her hands before her face, as the craft hurtles to the ground!!

In a horrifying long shot we see the island hit the floor of the valley as the black helicopters let loose their final assault: a devastating bomb!! Wait, is that in the script? The sinister ships make a final circuit of the scene before heading back to wherever they came from.

The shoot was over. The images were unbelievable, devastating and far, far more spectacular than even the most imaginative minds on the set could have anticipated.

It was a beautiful, perfect and emotionally astounding descent, and what's more it had all been caught on camera. After a silence that seemed to go on forever, Jamie yelled 'cut.'

The crew burst into cheers and applause while medical officers rushed over to the scene of the wreckage to ensure Noodle's safety.

Where's Noodle?

Where's NOODLE?!!

Panic sped around the set as it was discovered that Noodle was nowhere to be found. Her parachute was discovered amongst the wreckage of the burnt-out windmill, but it was badly flame-damaged, and impossible to tell exactly what had happened.

The support team tried and failed to make radio contact with her.

Russel and 2D were frantic. Amidst the noise, confusion and tears, Murdoc waltzed over to a clearly confused Jamie, leaned in and asked calmly, 'Did you get all that?'

The film was scrutinized minutely. Everything had seemed to go exactly according to plan. No foul play could be discovered. So where was Noodle?

Murdoc: I wouldn't worry about it. I'm sure she's fine. And we've got a video to make: let's get this baby into post production.

The footage was taken over to Passion Pictures, where Murdoc personally oversaw the completion of this beautiful video himself. He studied each and every frame as the movie came to life, until he was absolutely convinced. The footage revealed that there was no evidence of Jimmy Manson caught on camera. He'd gotten away with it.

Murdoc: Yup. It was the perfect crime. Despite a hundred cameras being pointed at the scene, no one had seen a thing. I got away with it. Nice and clean.

March 11th 2006 *El Mañana video premiers on Channel Four*

The Gorillaz' online audience and fanbase are distraught. Outraged messages are sent in, helplines are set up to talk kids through their trauma, and grown men weep into their beers over the loss of Noodle. Gorillaz for some unknown reason refuse to answer the question as to the truth behind Noodle's apparent demise. Murdoc Niccals seems oblivious and uncaring to this reaction. For him, and strangely for Russel and 2D, it appears to be business as usual.

BELOW
Murdoc in the Motorola ad
'Stripping for cash is yet another of my many talents'
MURDOC NICCALS

New York Apollo Shows

If you really want to know how to break people on the inside, here's a suggestion: once they've achieved the unbelievable task of pulling off something like Demon Days Live in Manchester, ask them to relocate the whole thing across the pond and stick it in a slightly smaller venue, with a power circuit that was originally installed in the eighteen-hundreds ...

The New York Apollo is one of the world's greatest, most historic venues. This magnificent building, set in Harlem, has played host to the likes of James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Bob Marley, Parliament, Marvin Gaye, Richard Pryor and more; a long, rich legacy of great musicians and comedians. Perfect for a giant Gorillaz hoe down ...

Only one thing. Manchester had been a funded proposition, very generously supported by the Manchester International Festival. But the act was just too good to disappear without an encore Stateside, so Gorillaz and the Demon Days Live act would have to sort the pennies out themselves. This called for some funding from the digital domain. Murdoc gave Motorola a quick call and asked them if they wanted to attach their mobile moniker to the greatest brand the world had ever seen ...

Motorola Advert – It's for yoo-hooo!

Corporate hook-ups aside, there was no way Gorillaz were going to allow this to happen with just a cheesy grin and a well-placed advert. Murdoc sought some twisted advice from the distinctly unsavoury minds of Jamie and his cohorts ...

Keeping it surreal, it was decided to have Murdoc playing a piano in a field, naked, Terry Jones style, with a Motorola mobile thrust down the back of his grubby pink thong. The footage of this antic would be displayed on a giant screen for all to see before the band performed.

Murdoc: You know, enough's enough, mate. I was actually really embarrassed to do this. I don't know why Jamie or Cass always come up with things where I'm in my pants, or naked or .... well, you know. I only ever wanted to be a bass player. I get so embarrassed with this constant display of nudity. They did that to me in the MTV cribs thing. I find it all so demeaning.

Really?

Murdoc: Nope. Just kidding. Bring it on, I love it ... Next time I probably won't even wear that thong.

With financial backing suitably secured, once again wheels were set in motion to regroup the entire Manchester posse, and set them on course for a Demon Days Live revival at the Apollo with a five-night run booked for the first week of April 2006.

Visa, passports and hotels once again duly arranged, it looked like this one was gonna outstrip the Opera House shows. On this occasion they would be graced with the magnificent presence of a very special guest. Hollywood legend and Gorillaz veteran Dennis Hopper had agreed to appear live on stage with the band for a reading of 'Fire Coming Out of a Monkey's Head', 'Demon Days' cautionary fable.

Murdoc: I simply belched a rumour about this 'Demon Days' event and 17 seconds later all tickets were gone. All five nights. Whoooosh!! There really could be something to this whole Gorillaz thing. We could actually probably even play a proper venue one day.

With Albarn at the helm once again, the 'Demon Days' band had been barked into shape. The six months' sabbatical since Manchester had obviously done them the world of good. They were sounding even better than ever.

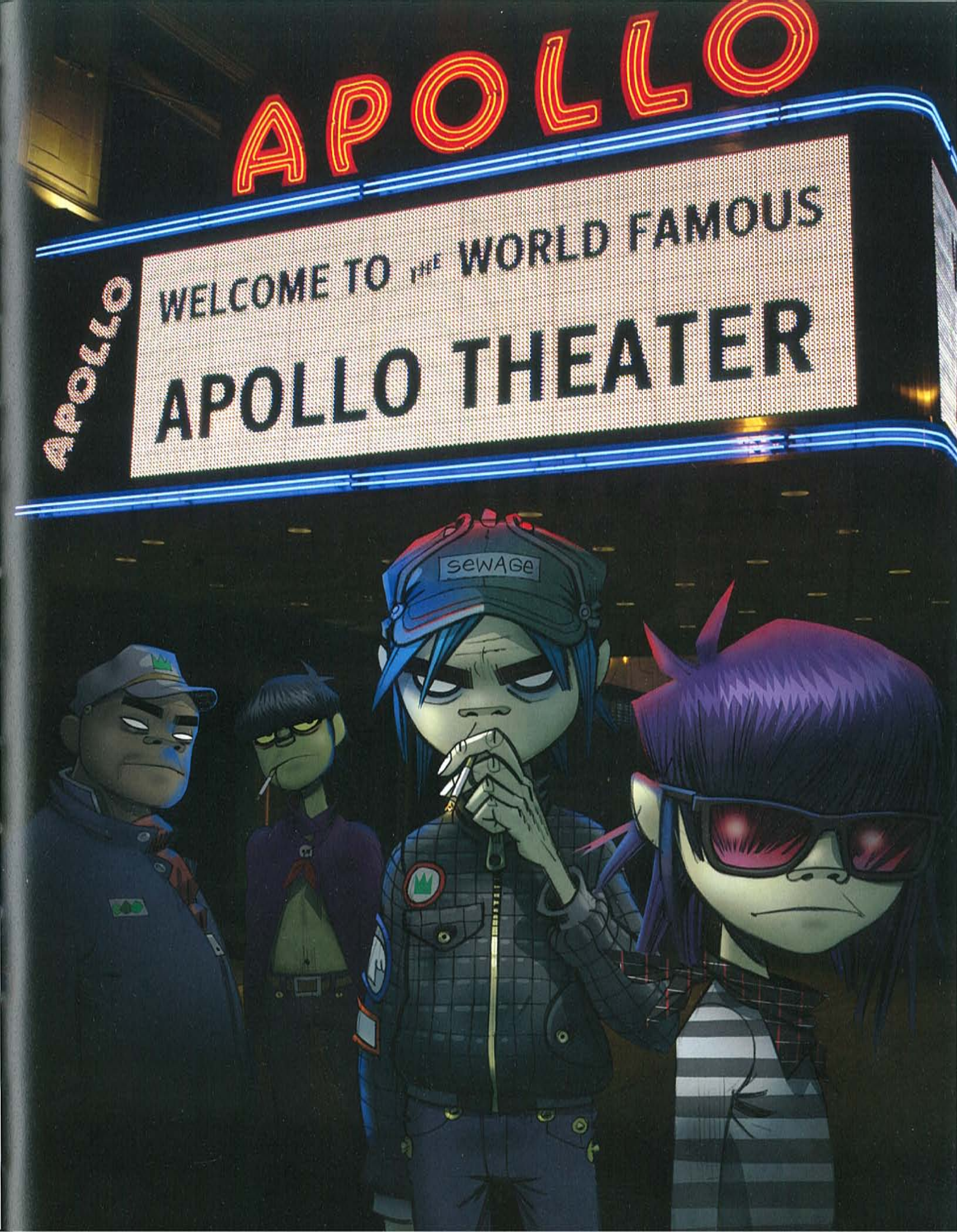
April 1st 2006 *The 'Demon Days' band assemble at The Apollo, for rehearsal and soundchecks*

With the stage duly dressed and all members present and correct, it would appear everything was now running smoothly. The building was vacated in preparation for the first performance the following evening.

April 2nd 2006 *First night of Demon Days Live at Harlem's Apollo Theater*

The queue for the gig snaked its lengthy way from the Apollo in Harlem all the way over to Manhattan, with the ectoplasm of expectation leaking like bubbly sewage out of the feverish crowd's craniums. The stage was set for another Demon delivery.

But wait! What's this???!! With everything apparently falling in to place, the last thing the band needed was a dodgy generator. The soundcheck that morning had revealed some pretty in-depth voltage issues, where the sound would cut out wholesale, mid-number. It's just not a viable proposition to perform with a system like that. But these things do sometimes happen and the crew and band worked throughout the day to iron out the problems. With only twenty minutes to showtime, the power issue seemed to be solved. Unfortunately, this false dawn only revealed the true extent of the problems. By rectifying the situation with the sound, it meant there was no power for the visuals. And no time to fix it ...


APOLLO
WELCOME TO THE WORLD FAMOUS
APOLLO THEATER
APOLLO
SEWAGE

Eventually, and with heavy heart, Damon Albarn made the unprecedented move of appearing in front of the expectant audience to announce that that night's performance would be unaccompanied by the visual support that Jamie Hewlett's crew had put together. The band, orchestra and guests would still be playing, however.

The musical performance that night was seamless, but many were left deflated and disappointed by the lack of visuals, feeling that despite the quality of the musical elements, they'd missed out on the complete Gorillaz picture-show.

Murdoc: I don't why I'm bothering, but in defence of Albarn's outfit I would like to say that on the first night the all-musical spectacular produced an 87-piece band, featuring Ike Turner, De La Soul, Bootie Brown, Neneh Cherry, Roots Manuva, Martina Topley-Bird, Shaun Ryder, a kids' choir, The Harlem Gospel choir, a string section fresh out of the Julliard school, a complete backing band, Albarn himself, plus appearances from me and whatsisface up in the royal box. But that ain't enough for some people. The visuals were down through no fault of anyone in particular. I mean, really, how much bang do you want for your buck?

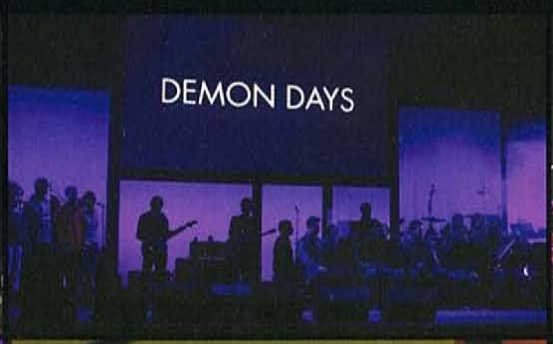
Russel: All of it. They were there to see the whole Gorillaz experience, not just one side of it.

By the second night, with all senses working overtime, the gremlins had been booted out of the auditorium and the whole Titanic operation was up and afloat again. The audiences, like a bunch of kids whacked out of their heads on Sunny D, were as jubilant and celebratory as the first night over in Manchester.

Murdoc and 2D had flown over especially to see the US reaction, and true to form, Murdoc couldn't keep his loud, messy mouth closed. He'd slipped the Apollo staff ten bucks, and as the houselights went down a spotlight appeared on the royal box. The audience, beholding the real Gorillaz, hollered their rapturous approval, which Mr Niccals obviously lapped up. Ever the raconteur, he then recounted a lewd bawdy tale of his protracted entrance in the US of A which involved him eventually engaging in filthy relations with a staff member at the Visa Immigration Passport Control. For everyone's benefit he graphically re-enacted the scene.

Murdoc: I did that every night they played the Apollo. The crowd loved it. I'd probably spin yarns for a living if I wasn't such a god on the bass.

The remaining shows went completely without hitch. New York graciously played host to the biggest, hottest ticket on the planet; a triumphant musical, visual extravaganza. The ecstatic aftershow parties ran from the



moment the band left the stage right up to soundcheck the following day, with each musician becoming more and more viscous by the hour. Now that's how you do a band properly, kids.

The Big Apple looked on benevolently at Neneh Cherry grooving through the cracked-out 'Kids with Guns', Bootie Brown throwing his 'Dirty Harry' shapes.

Murdoc: He was great. He skidded out like Kramer from Seinfeld every night in front of those body-popping kids and just let that audience have it. That was the point in every show where the whole thing burst in to life. Ta, Mr Brown.

Part musicians, part cartoons and part comedians, the three amigos De La Soul crashed the party for a foundation-rattling rendition of 'Feel Good Inc.' With the original Ike Turner bashing out his blues on 'Every Planet . . . ', the shows again revealed their heavy gravity. MF Doom's mad 'November Has Come' missive flew in via satellite link-up to the Apollo, before Roots Manuva and Martina Topley-Bird, looking like a couple of Miyazaki characters, joined the show for the illusory broken estate of 'All Alone'.

Murdoc: This is like being stuck in some kind of Greek Hell, reviewing the same songs for all eternity. Can I be excused?

The 'White Light' hurricane then tore through the venerable building in a most disrespectful way, wiping the walls with its cack-filled hands. A thoroughly rejuvenated Shaun Ryder bopped his way through 'DARE', the picture of Dorian Ryder now safely stuffed up in an attic somewhere.

On the last two nights, both to a minute-long standing ovation, Dennis Hopper took the stage, his mere presence, approval and participation adding a whole different weight and dimension to the proceedings. Again this displayed that the Gorillaz project was unified by mindset and not location, age, occupation or shoe-size.

Murdoc: That was the real Dennis Hopper?! Oh, I don't believe it. I thought one of those spods down at Passion had been fiddling around with their electrickery sticks again. Damn.

The spectacular was an odd and exhilarating affair to behold, but how could it have felt to actually have been a part of this surreal escapade? Why not ask the participants yourself?

Bootie Brown: I think that basically, the way that the group started off, with Jamie doing the animation, it . . . it just gives it a limitless type of situation. There's an actual band, but pretty much, people just know it as a virtual band. So you know,

ABOVE
From top: Bootie Brown, Roots Manuva, Shaun Ryder, Martina Topley-Bird

when you throw in the videos and you throw in everything else . . . it's . . . it's just big.

It feels big – people are getting into it and feeling like they're a part of it – it's a whole new situation, you know. It just rocks.

When . . . when your mind is stretched from one, it gets rocked into another thing. You may be looking at the video and not even looking at the band and just hearing the music. And then all of a sudden, you're looking at the band and not really listening to the music and it's . . . it's vice versa. I think that the show has so many facets to it, it's like a diamond. It's gonna catch you. From whatever angle that you're standing at, there'll be a part that's gonna shine and hit your eye. And I think that's what the show is like. It's a diamond and it just catches your eye in certain places.

Roots Manuva: It's not like a standard kind of performance. It's more like you're trying to be a part of a story, rather than the standard, 'Hey, ho, everybody get up!' It's . . . it's a freak show. It's a circus. It's like it's the greatest show on earth. It's . . . it's . . . it's weird. With so many people and so many people on the payroll. It's a big operation. It's huge. It's huge. And you can also mix it in with some cool people.

It's phenomenal. It's . . . it's out of the world. I ain't got a word for it. I mean, to . . . to get the linguistics together and say invent a word for this because it's quite unutterable. It's far out. Just . . . whoof! To be in Manchester, to be in the ghetto of Manchester, and then in . . . a ghetto in New York. And it's like this just keeps climbing and climbing and climbing and gettin' more and more trickier and more risqué but it still comes off. This is in the hands of . . . of . . . of a higher power. Wow. This is crazy. Pretty amazing. It's more than I could've asked for in any dream or any desire.

Shaun Ryder: I'll tell you what's really funny, this is like where we played in Manchester. And looking out of the window at the Apollo yesterday, it looks almost like the same sort of view out the window.

It's like being involved with Monty Python's Flying Circus. Quite cool, aren't we? We do put on a great show as people. I mean, in Manchester, there was 700 people involved, I gather. So, you know, if you went on tour with that, with that crew, it really would be a flying circus.

It's not like doing a gig. It's more like doing some sort of musical together. You know, the rocky, groovy, funky picture show or something. It's just being part of something sort of special. With all these great people.

I mean, you know, once a Gorilla, always a Gorilla. You really don't change your spots. We're spotty gorillas.

Martina Topley-Bird: Artists are funny people . . . especially this lot. Not everyone is a born entertainer. And not everyone's born working every minute, you know what I mean? We're all kind of a little bit strange. And so,

having that time to kind of get to know each other's really, really lovely. I'm afraid I sound like a hippy, but it's great.

Neneh Cherry: I'm just so proud that this is happening here. To be on the stage at the Apollo, I mean, it doesn't get better. You know, I saw Parliament here in, like, '76 or '77. So, uh, it's cool. It's recharging my batteries. Big time. I mean, every day that I'm doing this. I am, as I always am, doing the best that I can do. That's what I always have to try and do. And, you know, music is inspiring. It inspires me. Soon as you step on, you hear the clapping. How the hell are you not going to get happy?

Dennis Hopper: This scares me to death. The Apollo Theatre, being on stage. First of all, I've never sang a song, I've never ever even thought about it, much less spoken a verse, to song. I'm a little nervous about a live performance, I gotta tell you the truth. But I guess I'll live through it.

Ike Turner: The last time I was at the Apollo, there was fighting in that alley where the trucks were parked that night. One guy was throwing bricks at another guy, man, and it was really different. But it was a lot of fun. And when I walked in that door at the Apollo last night, man, that really brought back memories. You had to do 28 shows a week. You play seven a day. It was really something different.

Posdnuos, De La Soul: I love the fact that when you do something creative, you know a lot of times you can do something and you move on, but I can really see that our relationship with Gorillaz will go on. Possibly something with us, or something that's totally different, just actually meeting like minds, and coming together, I guess. Almost like superheroes, to put together an idea you believe in, to save music. I think that's what we get from it.

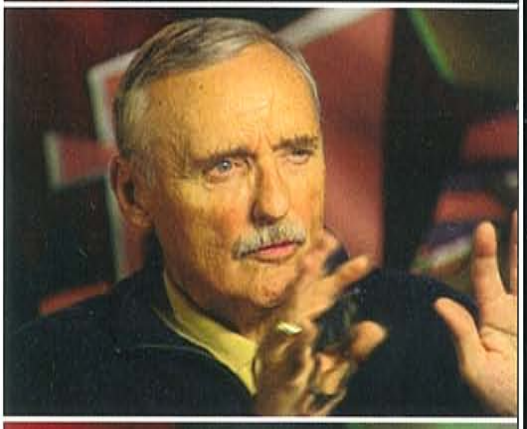
Dave, De La Soul: I think we definitely made some great friends – but even if those things had've dwindled down and died out, we still have the music. We still have the experience of putting on a CD or whatever it is, and saying, yeah, we did something. And I think to me that's even more important. I think the music involves everything: friendship, creativity, a vibe, whatever you wanna call it. The music is what'll always be, even after we're long gone and dead.

April 6th 2006 *Demon Days Live at the Apollo, last show day*

The Gorillaz tribute show now faced its last waltz, as unavoidably the final night crept up, a little too quick for comfort.

The closing trilogy of 'Fire ...' 'Don't Get Lost in Heaven' and album exit 'Demon Days' left the stateside theatre-goers clamouring for more.

The encore curtain was raised, and for the final time Albarn and zitherist Zeng Zhen gracefully yachted their way through 'Hong Kong' before the concert reached the climax on the resoundingly charming and evocative note of the Ibrahim Ferrer vocaled 'Latin Simone'. Here again, amongst the misshapen gang of miscreants, was a complete picture, and one with slightly more emotional intricacy than the one Murdoc drew of him and Madonna.



ABOVE
From top: Neneh Cherry, Dennis Hopper, Ike Turner, De La Soul

Murdoc: You can totally shut your face. That picture's brilliant.

As the curtain came down, this unusual opera had once more taken the audience on a musical journey through glorious golden heights and dim dark lows; leaving its passengers with a smile in their hearts but tears in their eyes.

Murdoc: It's like watching a clown cry. I'm missing something here, for sure. I don't get all the blubbing stuff. It's a gig! Have a few drinks, watch the band, go home. Simple.

Cold-hearted wisecracks aside, an odd sense of closure had descended on the assembled crew. Despite the wonder of these concerts, it was something of a downer to know that this wonderfully wonky opus would never be performed again. But that was always the point. The collaborative show had more than adequately made its mark. Had they not pulled the plug at that point, the entire enterprise might have fallen into a yawning artistic pothole, the trap of wishing to outgross a sellout, to repeat a point that had already been expertly made. And that would horribly soil the original endeavour.

So it only remained for each and every part of the Demon Days Live Show to be disassembled, packed back into the box and shelf in the cupboard marked 'History'.

The Demon Days Live show was now a fait accompli.

In Gorillaz-world there was still one matter to oversee.

April 10th 2006 *Fourth and final double A-side single 'El Mañana / Kids with Guns' released*

With the tragic but beautiful 'Noodle's demise'-based video winging its way around the world, Gorillaz released the double A-side single 'El Mañana / Kids with Guns'. This marked the final send-off to an epic album that had achieved so much, for so many, and whose vast network of supporters and collaborators – fans, musicians, video-makers, road crew, animators, pluggers, wig-makers, web-spinners, designers, electricians, producers, management, stylists, piano tuners, publicists – had dedicated years of their lives, every single one playing their part in a project they'd believed in and loved so all-completely.

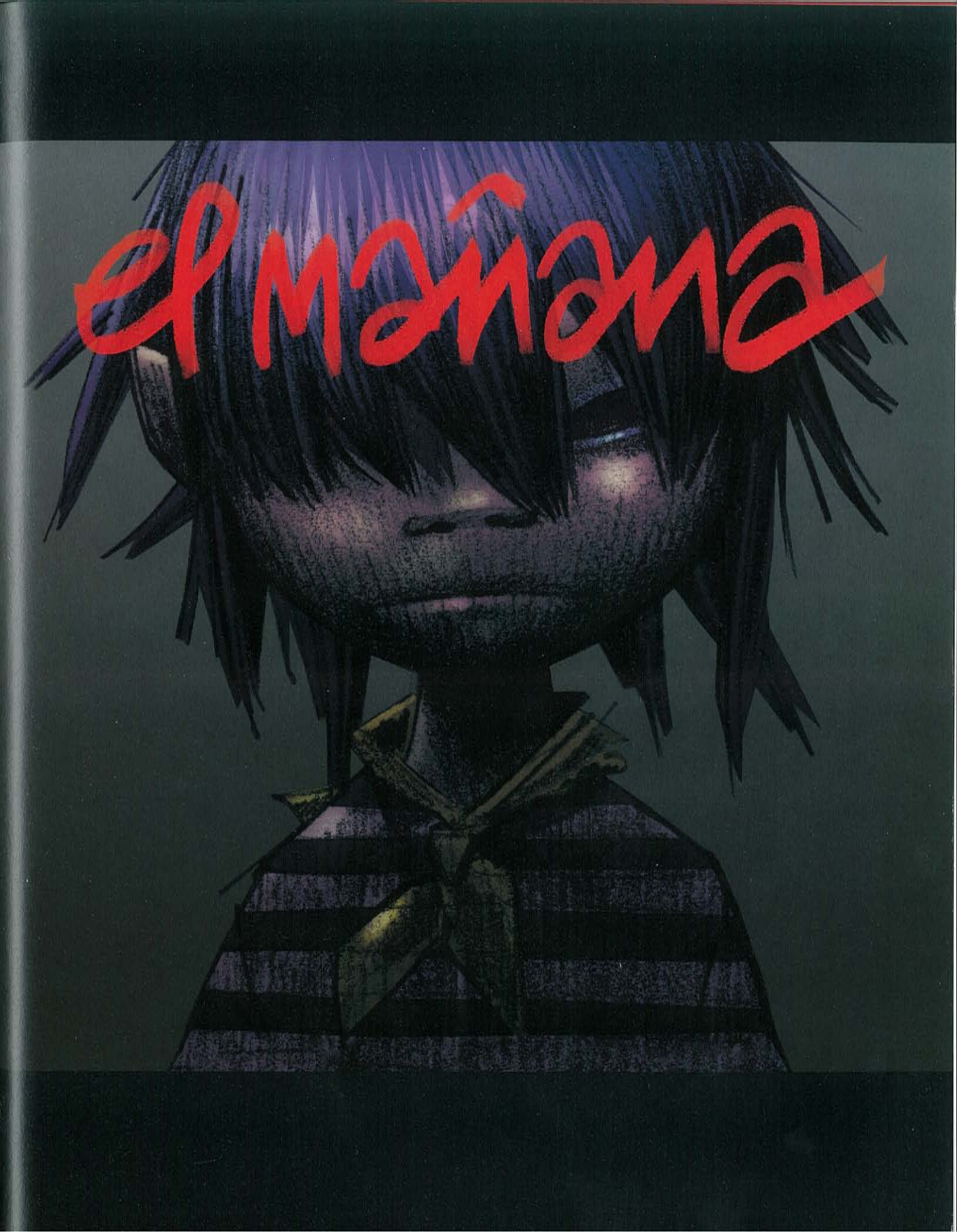
The magical magnificent ride that Murdoc, Noodle, 2D and Russel had initiated had dragged in its wake a whole nation of collaborators, cohorts, associates, talents and team-mates. The inspirational seeds shaken from the full flowering of the project were now scattered right around the globe. For these four individuals from god-knows-where, the achievements were remarkable and unrepeatable, an anomaly of time, talent and technology, the likes of which could never be thrown together in such a way again. For their associates, well, it left them with a lifetime of unbelievable stories for the grandchildren, and endless post-pub anecdotes for the jaffas.

The end of this album marked the culmination of a truly unique era. Gorillaz had created a world-shaking musical entity, a reference point of historical proportions, and left their cavernous big-booted footprints right around the world, chasms and gulfs for future talents to fall into.

What had set out to be simply a colourful and creative caper for a bunch of maverick, meddling minds, had become a gigantic and global beast, a chimera whose eyes, heart and mind had cast a soulful glance at the state of our world and roared back a spirited response.

Gorillaz had said their piece.

The Ogre had spoken.


el mañana

The Aftermath

The Last Interview, Kong Studios, Districtshire, Essex

'"Always be wary of people who use quotes". I don't know who said that.'
MURDOC NICCALS

Since the filming of the sumptuously shadowy 'El Mañana' video and Noodle's disappearance, something mysterious had been happening to the Kong Studios building. Cracks had begun to appear, rooms were falling away . . . the very fabric of the building had begun to disintegrate.

It was almost as if, with Noodle gone, the balance had been destroyed; the heart and spirit of the mansion had been removed. Left a shell of bricks, concrete and glass debris, the building had given up its fight against the ravages of the Essex climate. The grand palace of Kong Studios was now just cold, soulless rubble.

Murdoc: Couldn't have said it better myself.

Murdoc Niccals, bass supremo of Gorillaz, ex-resident of Stoke, on-off Satanist and the man with the world at his feet, turned 40 this year. His wicked blood revitalised by a hastily performed transfusion, generously provided by 2D, he sits opposite me in all his glory, looking well-groomed and dapper. A proper spiv. He lights up a 'Lucky Lung', blows the smoke out and then breaks into a big smile. The cad.

First things first, Niccals. What have you done with Noodle?

Murdoc: Noodle? Yeah, she's fine. She's off in the Maldives, just chilling out.

What?! What about the video? The helicopters? The bullets? The bomb! The burning windmill??! What about your sick deal with malevolent record company stalker Jimmy McManson?

Murdoc: OK. I guess you've waited long enough. Noodle's safe, she was just acting as planned. Jimmy, on the other hand, he got it with both barrels. This is where you find out what *really* happened . . .

Murdoc, revelling in his raconteur's role, then retells the events of the 'El Mañana' shoot from a slightly different angle. While the 'copters chased the floating island as directed, Murdoc was stood back on the ground, at the edge of the valley. As the first plastic bullets ripped into the island, Murdoc had given the thumbs up to Jimmy, positioned at the very top window of the windmill, who leapt up out of his hiding place and went for the hidden guns.

Moments later, Jimmy's face re-appeared at the window, gesturing manically. He couldn't find the guns.

Murdoc: I'm not surprised. I hadn't put them there.

Murdoc gave Jimbo another big thumbs up and nodded. Jimmy's face drained. Smelling a rat, he tried the door of the tower room. It was locked!! Jimmy ran back to the window, banging furiously on the glass. *'IT'S LOCKED!!!'* he screamed. *HE'S STUCK IN THERE!!!*

Murdoc nodded enthusiastically and this time gave Jimmy the full Macca!! A complete double thumbs up McCartney salute. He slowly mouthed the words 'I KNNOOOWW'.

It hit Jimmy like a concrete wrecking ball. Murdoc Niccals had set *HIM* up. It was him going down with this ship! Not Noodle! HIM!

The helicopters fired and explosives were detonated, bringing the inflatable prop down, down, down. At the pre-arranged time, Jamie Hewlett gave Noodle the command, and she parachuted safely off the island. Everything was supercool and ship-shape for the golden Gorillaz.

Murdoc: There's no way on earth I'm killing Noodle. Are you mad? She's Noodle. We're Gorillaz! The greatest band on earth. I'm arrogant, ruthless even, but I'm not stupid. I'm not having some two-bit mouldy despot record company nut killing off *my* band. No way, José. That clown got what he deserved . . . He set himself up and burned all the evidence in the process. Instant Karma for Mr Jimmy Manson.

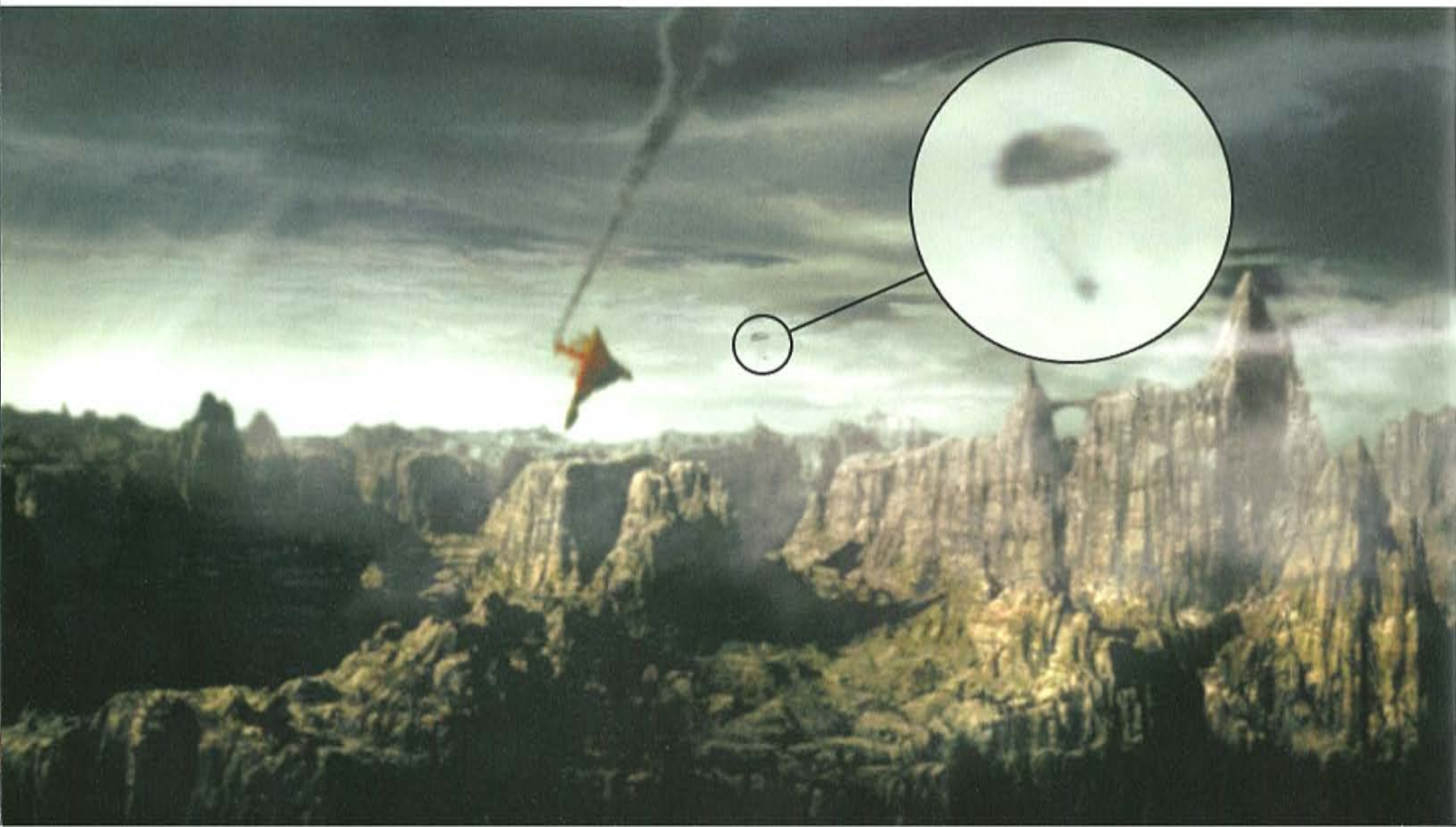
And you're not worried about your confession in print?

Murdoc: I'm a cartoon, mate. You'll have a hard time getting anything to stick on me. I don't even have fingerprints.

Don't you feel any remorse?

Murdoc: Not a jot, it was him or us. And it's not gonna be us now, is it? So there you go. 'Jimmy Manson'. He wasn't big and he wasn't clever. But with Noodle, she was always going to take off after the 'El Mañana' video. It's been a real long haul for all of us, but especially her. The signs had been there for months.

Cardboard boxes started to appear in Noodle's room back in February, so I knew then that she was packing to leave. Also, one of her floating windmill contraptions had appeared, moored outside her room. So we made a deal. She just wanted to be left alone, disappear from everything for a while. If she did the 'El Mañana' shoot she could disappear straight after with no fuss. Maybe she's not as cut out for this life as she makes out. Maybe she just wanted to take a break, who knows? It's up to her . . . But the video was a beautiful expression about the release of the soul, so it was worth the effort. It left everything on the correct and appropriate note.



Well then, mouthpiece, that's it. That's how Gorillaz stole the world, right?

Murdoc: Yup, that's how it's done. Well, actually, it's one way to do it. There are loads of ways to get to the top, but that was our route. Gorillaz? It's just a bit of fun. There's no big secret to it. It's just some good music, smart videos, a couple of mouthy quotes, good website . . . big deal. I do slag loads of people off, but I don't really mean it. I'm just having a laugh. Anyway, it's an honour to be rubbished by Gorillaz. So, onward and upward, eh? Last interview! Fantastic. What more can you possibly want to know?

Where's 2D?

Murdoc: I dunno. He's off poncing about somewhere. He's probably gonna try and become an actor or a model or whatever . . .

As Murdoc speaks, another chunk of plaster falls from the ceiling.

And Russel Hobbs?

Murdoc: Russel's all good too. He's still stitching together his taxidermy army of undead animals, and practising his drums, but I think he's getting into production. It's a great role for him because his knowledge of music's just too big for him to be stuck behind a drumkit. But I hope he doesn't end up giving all our Gorillaz secrets away. Third album? Could happen . . . .

And you?

Murdoc: Ah yes, 'me'. Well, sonny, there's a whole world out there for me to conquer. I'm going to explore a few . . . ah . . . avenues. But I wouldn't count on Gorillaz being away for too long. We're really still in our ascent, old chum. And we know what happened the last time, don't we? Lengthy holidays don't seem to suit us lot . . .

Where's all your dough gone?

Murdoc: I dunno. It just goes. Golf club membership, which for some reason is coming in at about £230,000 a year, various fines I've had to pay off for, y'know . . . 'tampering with the mail' and stuff . . . I got a boob job done for a laugh once. Took it out the next day. Also I bought loads of those plastic policeman's helmets. Thousands of them. You know, I seem to spend a whole lot of time just wandering around the Studios alone at night now. Sometimes people do come over, hence the copper's hats, but most of the time I'm just knocking about the pile planning how to re-arrange the future . . .

What's your next move?

Murdoc: 'Moves', actually. I've got loads planned. I was thinking of going into politics. I mean, if an Austrian bodybuilder with a limited vocabulary and history of playing Conan the Barbarian can become 'The Governator' of California, I think I stand a very good chance of becoming World Leader. In 20 years' time Gorillaz'll probably have formed some kind of musical NATO, bringing all the tangled branches and offshoots of Gorillaz under one huge federation. With me as the emperor. A kind of . . . benevolent dictator. Like Caligula with a permanent hangover.

Sounds great.

Murdoc: But first I've got to find another building, this place is just coming apart . . . Anyway, I'm, well *we're*, working on something that'll be REALLY big. Seriously, it's gonna make everything we've done so far look like a warm-up act for, well . . . er . . . this great big new Gorillaz thing. It's going to make you shudder when you see it. It's bigger than anything we've done, bigger than anything anybody's done! Think of your best idea and then put it in the bin, mate. It ain't gonna touch this.

So Murdoc Niccals, the big powerful entertainment mogul, huh? What's this all about, y'know, the whole 'Lust for Glory' thing?

Murdoc goes silent suddenly and sits pensive for a moment.

Murdoc: You know . . . In my quieter moments . . . sometimes I think that maybe all this, all these awards, the videos, the flashiness, my bullying, slagging off bands, the lifestyle . . . I think maybe I'm just . . . trying to . . . distract myself. Avoiding the real issue, of growing up, responsia . . . respons . . . responsibility. There's something deep within me that I can't . . . I just don't want to look at. All of this rock star nonsense is a way of avoiding the real issues in my life.

What do you think they could be?

Murdoc: I don't quite know. Maybe it's just the . . . the thing with my dad, you know. That story at the beginning, with the talent contest, the puppet costume, the pub . . . Maybe Gorillaz is my way of getting back at him, proving that it didn't have to be like that.

Really?

Murdoc stares at me. A sense of portentous gravity holds the moment. Murdoc's emotions seem close to the surface. This may be the revelation, the breakthrough we've been waiting for all these years. He stares at me dolefully with his big brown Bambi eyes. His face then breaks out into a full-beamed sloppy grin. He guffaws.

Murdoc: Ha haaa ha ha. No, not in the slightest! Ha ha ha! I can't believe you fell for all that rubbish, all over again! No, not all. I only said that to give your stupid book a line about 'revelation'. I thought you'd see right through that one, really. At this stage, I'm really surprised at you.

Murdoc leans forward and bops me on the head with the silver top of his cane. I haven't even noticed the thing before this moment.

OW!!

Murdoc: Nope. I do Gorillaz and all of this stuff because we're Kings of the World, man. The best. The B.E.S.T.™©. What d'you do when you've got talent like this? Bottle it up? Wait for a rainy day? Noooooo . . . UNLEASH IT, DEAR BOY! Share it with the world!

He gets up, adjusts his cape, and smiles at me like I'm a foolish child.

Murdoc: Right then. That's your lot. I think we are well and truly done. It only leaves me to say 'Get off my property' and I trust you'll sod off forthwith. Go and tippety-type up your weird little notes before Penguin come down and kick your arse.

He turns and swaggers away down the corridor, whistling the bass-line to

'Feel Good Inc.' while intermittently chuckling to himself.

Hey. You can't get away that easily, Niccals, there's one more thing you need to clear up. The helicopters in the 'El Mañana' video, what happened there? We're not all as vacant as your singer, you know. We did notice that they weren't the same ones from 'Feel Good Inc.' ...

Murdoc (shouting down the corridor): What's your name? Columbo? But you're right. That pair had been tailing us for some time, I just never mentioned it at the shoot. They zoomed straight off when we finished filming. No one knew where they came from. And then directly after, the real helicopters, the ones from the original 'Feel Good Inc.' video turned up. They'd been held up by bad weather over Essex. I asked Jamie afterwards but he didn't know anything about those mysterious choppers either. No one did. Odd ... Very spooky ... But there you go. Maybe we'll meet those two again someday.

So it would appear that not even the otherworldly powers and arrogant omnipotence of Murdoc Niccals can control all things. Unseen forces would seem to still be at play, monitoring the maverick behaviour of this fiery foursome. Murdoc and his Gorillaz have achieved a staggering amount, but have in the process ruffled and riled many on their path to glory.

What lies in wait for Gorillaz is anybody's guess. Whether they can make it a hat-trick and pull off yet another globe-rattling Gorillaz album, who knows? It's perfectly possible that the pint-sized psycho Jimmy Manson was only a foot-soldier in the army of darkness that awaits Gorillaz. And whatever institutions Gorillaz train their crosshairs on next time are bound to retaliate in some way.

Whatever does unfold, you can guarantee that Gorillaz won't go quietly.

The hulking ape-like being that this collective have created will no doubt return in some form or another, smashing its way out the jungle to tear up the headlines and smear its own stinking genius around the globe once again. This will undoubtedly be accompanied by their own parping-mongoloid, multi-zillion selling soundtrack.

Until their return we can only wait with bated breath and hope and pray that whatever adventures befall the four individuals in the meantime won't put this stupendously odd bunch out of action for good.

The brilliance of Gorillaz' creativity is undeniable. Their success has been irrefutable. Their dedication to the cause, unquestionable. Their lust for glory unquenchable. The strength of their sanity ... well, don't push it. So all that remai –

Murdoc: Hey! Oi! Enough. We're done, right? So, I'll just say 'see you later face-ache.' *And remember, the future's up for grabs!!!*

Shouting down the corridor, his back to me ...

Murdoc: It's the greatest fun on earth!! And Gorillaz, my friend, *are* the greatest group to roam the planet. That's why we do all this. Gorillaz: undisputed champions of the world. THE GREATEST.

That clears that up, then. Murdoc turns, gives me a big wink, and then he's gone. All I'm left with is just a vague brown smell; a mild stench of old fags, warm, stale beer and cheap aftershave. The distinctive smell of Mister Murdoc Niccals.

The smell of victory.

Slammmmm!!!!

Right-O. That'll be, er ...

THE END

Epilogue

October 26th 2006 *Sounds are heard coming from the basement of the derelict Kong Studios building site*

From the shattered basin of Kong Studios, a small, almost incomprehensible sound can be heard emitting from the damaged radio set in the Brian room. To the untrained ear it'd be nothing more than crackling feedback, but for those with a keener sense of sound it's a distinctly recognisable voice; that of Noodle, Japanese guitar-player of legendary band Gorillaz!!

'Murdoc!!!!! Russel ... Is there anybody there??!!! It's me, Noodle ..... Is there anybody there!!!! You need to reply ..... Hellllooooo!!! Come In ..... It's Noodle ... I've found the missing ..... they're coming!!!! ..... (quieter) the reception here is really terrible ... (Back to normal volume) MURDOC!!!!!! ..... Murdoc!!!! Come in!!!! They know where you ... . Mur ..... It's coming from ..... Murdoc MAYDAY ... MAYDAY ... Murdoc!!!!! COME IN GORILLAZZZZ!!!!!'

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'Every care and attempt has been made to acknowledge and thank the legions upon legions of associates, contributors and facilitators involved with my band Gorillaz. If there is anyone we have missed, however, please take this as a personal snub and let it haunt you all the way to the grave. It's almost definitely deliberate, as these things usually are.' MURDOC NICCALS, MD

In 2001 the animated band Gorillaz – bass-slayer mastermind Murdoc Niccals, hip hop hardman drummer Russel Hobbs, Japanese girl-guitarist Noodle and spiky blue-haired singer 2D – hit the planet like a musical meteor with their first smash 'Clint Eastwood', instantly becoming a chart-topping mainstay. They've been making headlines ever since. The awards have come thick and fast – Grammys, Webbys, MTV Awards, Ivor Novellos – and they've sold in excess of 15 million records to date.

They've reconfigured the musical landscape, innovating and entertaining with each and every turn, ruffling feathers, pushing faces, confusing and enthralling in the process. Their groundbreaking attitude has seen the fantastic foursome take a staggering array of influences, musical, visual and otherwise, and rework them into a unique world of their own design. No other group has managed to encapsulate the creative spirit of the digital age as well as Gorillaz.

Their astonishing success is even more surprising when you consider this has all been achieved against a backdrop of demonic possession, underworld dealings, amnesia, exorcisms, prison terms and jaw-dropping stupidity.

Now, in Rise of the Ogre, *Gorillaz have for the first time put mouth to paper and agreed to talk us through the unique thinking behind Gorillaz, revealing the complete story of this incredible band from childhood, to Gorillaz inception, through to albums, adverts, tours, videos, influences, breakdowns, break-ups and beyond.*

Come with me now as we delve into the amazi–

'Mate, stop now. It's all in the book. Just have a flick through and you'll get the idea pretty quick, OK?'
Murdoc Niccals, King of the World

'Gorillaz virtually changed my wife . . . sorry, I mean, life . . . no, actually, it was my wife' ***Terry Gilliam***

UK £25.00
CAN $39.00

The World's Most Successful Virtual Band, Gorillaz are 2D (vocals), Murdoc Niccals (bass), Noodle (guitar) and Russel Hobbs (drums). Formed in Essex in 1998, the band were signed by Parlophone at their very first gig. Their eponymous debut album was released to a chorus of acclaim in 2001 and was followed by the apocalyptic *Demon Days* in 2005. Feted worldwide for their musical and visual innovation, Gorillaz have sold over 15 million records to date.

'Cass Browne has done a marvellous job of stitching together the half-truths, lies, jokes and time-wasting misinformation we've given him into a semi-cohesive story about Gorillaz. He's clearly talented in many fields and I suspect is only one set of knee-cymbals away from joining the circus full-time. The fact that the book is even finished is a wonderful success, as it means that I don't have to stare at his silly face any longer' **Murdoc Niccals**

'What can you say about Jamie Hewlett? His diligence and attention to detail throughout the Gorillaz project, as the band's stylist, photographer and video director, has been an incredible experience for him, providing him with a fantastic grounding for future employment. When he does finally decide to branch out and do something on his own these skills, I'm sure, will stand him in good stead. In the meantime I'd like him to cease all contact with me forthwith' **Murdoc Niccals**

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